

## “THE FALSIFICATION OF SCRIPTURE AND MEDIEVAL CHRISTIAN AND JEWISH POLEMICS”<sup>1</sup>

IRVEN M. RESNICK

### I. *Introduction*

It has become evident to even the casual reader of Christian literature treating European Jews and Judaism that a dramatic shift had taken place by the end of the twelfth or early thirteenth century. This shift will be reflected not only in the high culture of ecclesiastics, many of whom had become increasingly aggressive in their polemical attacks on Jews and Judaism,<sup>2</sup> but also in the popular culture of medieval Europe. As a result, Gavin Langmuir has argued that at least for Capetian France and England the traditional anti-Judaism of Christian theology and culture had, by the end of the twelfth century, been replaced by anti-semitism, i.e. the *irrational* fear of the Jew which, Langmuir believes, had not existed previously in medieval Europe. While more problematic may be his claim that this irrational fear resulted from the outward projection onto the Jews of Christians' own deep-seated doubts regarding Christian doctrines—doubts fed by Christian contacts with Islam and by the emergence of numerous so-called judaizing heresies that attacked the religiosity of the Gregorian age<sup>3</sup>—nevertheless his conclusion seems inescapable, viz. that the very presence of Jews in medieval

---

<sup>1</sup> An early version of this paper was delivered before a colloquium at Wolfson College (Oxford) on 7 February, 1995. I would like to thank in particular the convenor, Dr. Daniel Frank of Wolfson College and the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies. My thanks also to Professor Daniel Lasker of Ben-Gurion University for valuable suggestions and helpful criticism. I would also like to thank the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies for supporting my research through a Jerusalem Trust Fellowship.

<sup>2</sup> For an important discussion of new developments in religious polemics against Judaism, see Amos Funkenstein, “Basic Types of Anti-Jewish Polemics in the Later Middle Ages,” *Vivator* 2 (1971): 373-382.

<sup>3</sup> For the hypothetical rather than real association of Christian heresies with Jews and Judaism, see especially David Berger's “Christian Heresy and Jewish Polemic in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries,” *Harvard Theological Review* 68 (1975): 287-303. For the importance of the notion that Jews were increasingly viewed as a sort of Islamic fifth column in western Christendom, see also Alan Cudler, “Innocent III and the Distinctive Clothing of Jews and Muslims,” in *Studies in Medieval Culture III*, ed. John R. Sommerfeldt (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University, 1970).

Christendom had become increasingly threatening.<sup>4</sup> They were, therefore, to be more and more exploited: economically, socially, as well as ideologically, in an effort to reinforce Christian faith.<sup>5</sup> Ultimately, perceived to be a danger to the unitary Christian society sought by the Gregorian Reform, Jews were increasingly marginalized in Christian culture. By the later Middle Ages they will become targets for expulsion.<sup>6</sup>

These developments challenged the customary tolerance for Jews that had informed medieval Christian culture. Although periodically violence had erupted to threaten the Jewish presence, as witnessed for example by the attacks on Jewish communities at the time of the first Crusade, by and large both churchmen and lay rulers had attempted to restrain these attacks at the same time as they acquiesced to (or promoted) a deterioration in the legal status accorded to Jews.<sup>7</sup> As Solomon Grayzel argued, Pope Calixtus II's (1119-1124) famous bull *Sicut Judeis* may be viewed as an attempt following the first Crusade to protect Jewish communities from the violence they had suffered. This bull reiterated the position of Pope Gregory the Great (ca. 540-604), who had affirmed that a Jewish presence in Christendom ought to be tolerated; that Jews should be protected in their persons and property from harm; and that, in their religious life, they should not be subject to forced baptism but should be allowed all that is licit for them in their religious lives.<sup>8</sup>

This moderate position reflects as well Augustine's contention that Jews should be tolerated in the Christian world because they have preserved the Law and the text of the Hebrew scriptures. In the Church's conflict with the pagan world in particular, Augustine (d. 430) perceived this Jewish function to have great importance. Thus, he directs critics, who suggested that the prophecies Christians claim Jesus fulfilled were fabricated after his death, to scrutinize the books of the Jews, for they have preserved a true record.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Raoul Manselli remarks that by 1150 a new attitude toward heretics in Christendom, which despaired of their conversion and sought only their elimination, was extended to both Jews and Muslims. See his "La polémique conte les Juifs dans la polémique antihérétique," In *Cahiers de Fanjeaux*, vol. 12: *Juifs et judaïsme de Languedoc* (Toulouse: Édouard Privat, pp. 252-267).

<sup>5</sup> See his *Toward a Definition of Anti-Semitism* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Oxford: University of California Press, 1990), especially chapters 3-5, 8-10, and 13.

<sup>6</sup> On the emergence of the concept of a unified Christendom, see John Van Engen, "The Christian Middle Ages as an Historiographical Problem," *The American Historical Review* 91 (1986): 519-552.

<sup>7</sup> The root of these changes may already be present in the canonical literature of the eleventh century, i.e. prior to the First Crusade. See John Gilchrist, "The Perception of Jews in the Canon Law in the Period of the First Two Crusades," *Jewish History* 3/1 (1988): 9-24.

<sup>8</sup> For Gregory's views, see especially Shlomo Simonsohn, *The Apostolic See and the Jews* (8 vols.; Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1988-1991), 1: *Documents: 492-1404*, Docs. 5; 20; and 28.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Augustine's *Sermo* 200.2, "quid aliud hic significavit divina providentia,

For Augustine, the Jews continue to have this important purpose in the divine economy: they preserve the divine Law and the prophecies in their scriptures, which Christians alone rightly understand. They are, then, our "supporters in their books, our enemies in their hearts, and witnesses in their codices . . ." <sup>10</sup>

A second positive function is that the Jews' empirical condition—living in exile, powerless and despised by the majority culture—confirms the truth of Old Testament prophecies regarding God's rejection of this people and the translation of the elected status of Israel to the Church. Though rejected by God, the Jews nevertheless must not be destroyed, for while at the end a faithful remnant will be saved, in addition they have a certain purpose *now*. Consequently, Augustine applies Ps. 59:12 to the Jews, "Slay them not lest my people forget, scatter them by thy power and bring them down, O Lord our shield."<sup>11</sup> They have been conquered, he adds, by the Romans and lost their holy city, to which they are even denied access. But the Jews—like Cain—bear a sign that no one should kill them. They bear the sign or mark of the Law and remain necessary for the nations that believe, for in their misery, Augustine insists, God reveals his mercy for the New Israel and reveals the very truth of Christian claims.<sup>12</sup>

While such tolerance for Jews had its limits—e.g. it certainly did not suggest that they should be allowed to prosper in Christian society—Augustine's view nevertheless established a kind of *modus vivendi* for both Jews and Christians into the twelfth century and beyond.<sup>13</sup> St. Bernard (d. 1153), in his letter to the clergy of France prior to the second Crusade, condemns the monk Radulph whose fierce rhetoric demanded a massacre of the Jews. In his exhortation Bernard was not moved so much by compassion as by Augustine's view: viz., if we kill the Jews, they can no longer perform their twin func-

---

nisi apud Iudaeos solas divinas Litteras remansuras, quibus Gentes instruerentur, illi excaecarentur; quas portarent non ad adiutorium salutis suae, sed ad testimonium salutis nostrae? . . . si forte Pagani, quos lucrari volumus, dixerint non eas tanto ante praedictas, sed post rerum eventum, ut haec quae facta sunt prophetata putarentur, a nobis esse confictas; Iudaeorum codices recitamus, ut tollatur dubitatio Paganorum . . ." PL 38: 1030.

<sup>10</sup> Augustine, *De fide rerum quae non videntur*, c. 6.9, PL 40: 179. The full passage reads, "Non sunt ergo occisi, in eo quod non sunt quae apud eos legebantur et audiebantur obliiti. Si enim Scripturas sanctas, quamvis eas non intelligant, penitus obliviscerentur, in ipso Iudaico ritu occiderentur; quia cum Legis et Prophetarum nihil nossent Iudaei, prodesset non possent. Ergo occisi non sunt, sed dispersi: ut quamvis in fide, unde salvi fierent, non haberent; tamen unde nos adjuvaremur, memoria retinerent, in Libris suffragatores, in cordibus nostri hostes, in codicibus testes." For similar expressions, see Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, XI-XXII, 18.46, CCSL 48/2 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1955); and, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* LI-C, CCSL 39 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1956), pp. 744-45.

<sup>11</sup> *De civitate Dei* 18.46.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* LI-C, p. 744.

<sup>13</sup> For less positive views of Jews in the Patristic era, see Gerhart B. Ladner, "Aspects of Patristic Anti-Judaism," *Viator* 2 (1971): 355-363.

tions any longer, that is preserving the record of God's prophecies in their books and witnessing to their truth by their own degradation. So, like Augustine he too appeals to Ps. 59:12 and proclaims, "Slay them not."<sup>14</sup> Similarly, toward the end of the twelfth century Peter of Blois (d. ca. 1212), one of the few men of letters of the Middle Ages famous during his own lifetime, defends Augustine's view and remarks that the Jews bear the truth of the prophets in their codices and the passion of Jesus in their very faces.<sup>15</sup>

This principle of toleration, even if not altogether benign, predicated on the twin functions performed by the Jews, continued to operate for most Christian writers from Augustine through the twelfth century. Certainly, as Augustine also noted, they remained enemies in their hearts, and blind to the truth of the Christian mysteries. Nevertheless, they retained a place in the divine economy that demanded their survival.<sup>16</sup>

Their survival ensured that contacts between Jews and Christians would continue throughout the Middle Ages. While such contacts were sometimes perceived to be threatening to Christian faith, they continued nevertheless on many levels. Accounts of these contacts from the earlier Middle Ages sometimes suffer from rhetorical excess, but they nevertheless still allow for the continued presence of Jews in Christendom. For example, an eleventh century monk of Regensburg, Otloh of St. Emmeram, contends that he knew a Jew of that city well, named Abraham, who would bark out blasphemies against God like a dog whenever Otloh spoke to him of the Lord Jesus Christ!<sup>17</sup> But Abraham's blasphemies were not punished by Otloh or a lay ruler; rather, Otloh imagines Abraham's punishment will appear not in this life but in the next. More, one perceives that the monks of St. Emmeram had a cordial, if not friendly relationship, with Abraham. Neither need one be entirely surprised by this sort of contact. At least when not engaged in

<sup>14</sup> *Epist.* 363, 6-7, in *S. Bernardi Opera*, eds. J. Leclercq and H. Rochais (8 vols.; Rome: Editiones Cisterciensis, 1977-), 8: 316-317. For a study of Bernard's perception of Jews and Judaism, see David Berger, "The Attitude of St. Bernard of Clairvaux Toward the Jews," in *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 40 (1972): 89-108. Although Bernard incurred some risk in his defense of Jews, Berger maintains that Bernard's writings leave the impression nonetheless that he was antisemitic.

<sup>15</sup> *Contra perfidiam Judaeorum*, 1, PL 207: 826. On Peter's career, see especially R.W. Southern, "Peter of Blois: A Twelfth Century Humanist?" in *Medieval Humanism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), ch. 7.

<sup>16</sup> Commenting on Augustine's perception of the "new Jewish mission," Bernhard Blumenkranz remarked: "L'économie divine a permis aux Juifs de subsister en vue de porter témoignage aux chrétiens. Ce témoignage, ils le portent doublement: d'abord, par les livres de l'Ancien Testament, qu'ils conservent en leur forme primitive et qu'ils peuvent présenter dès que les chrétiens voient soulevée une contestation de leur authenticité. Mais ce témoignage, ils le portent encore par les conditions mêmes de leur survie: par le fait de leur dispersion, et par le fait de leur dégradation." See his "Augustin et les Juifs—Augustin et le Judaïsme," *Recherches Augustiniennes* 1 (1958): 239-240.

<sup>17</sup> *Liber visionum*, PL 146: 364C.

what was often perceived to be a fruitless, if not dangerous, dialogue with Jews over Christian messianic claims made on behalf of Jesus, this principle of toleration allows for the possibility of positive encounters between Jews and Christians, in particular as Christians turned to the Jews for a better understanding of the biblical texts they safeguarded.

Thus, one may document a series of intellectual contacts between Jewish scholars and Christian biblical exegetes and correctors from the Carolingian era to the end of the Middle Ages. Alcuin sought Jewish masters to learn the meaning of the Hebrew text, as did Rabanus Maurus (d. 856), and such contacts increase in number from the last quarter of the eleventh century and into the twelfth. Among those seeking such encounters were Abbot Sigo (1055-1070) of St. Florent's abbey at Saumur; Peter Abelard (d. 1142); Stephen Harding of Cîteaux (d. 1134); Peter Comestor (d. 1179); and the Victorines, Hugh (d. 1142) and Andrew (d. 1175). All were interested in examining the text of the Hebrew Bible in the possession of the Jews and learning as well the sense—especially the literal sense—of the Hebrew scriptures, the *Hebraica veritas*.<sup>18</sup> While not all of these figures went to the trouble of learning Hebrew, others, Christian Hebraists of the twelfth century, did—sometimes eliciting criticism from religious authorities.<sup>19</sup> All of these, however, display not only an interest in the Hebrew *veritas* of the text, that is the Hebrew text itself, but also an interest in the way the Jews *interpret* their text, generating genuine exegetical exchanges.<sup>20</sup>

Tolerance, then, and religious difference coexisted in Christian culture into the twelfth century. This may seem something of a paradox given that more polemical treatises written *contra Judaeos* were penned in the twelfth century than in all of the earlier Christian centuries combined. Yet many of these—perhaps the majority—display an irenic spirit at variance with the image conjured up by the term “polemic.” Examples may be found in Gilbert Crispin's *Disputation of a Jew and a Christian*, written in the last decade of the

<sup>18</sup> See especially Aryeh Grabois, “The *Hebraica Veritas* and Jewish-Christian Intellectual Relations in the Twelfth Century,” *Speculum* 50 (1975): 613-634.

<sup>19</sup> For example, a Cistercian statute from 1198 recommends that a certain monk, Populetus, who had turned to Jews in order to learn Hebrew, should be corrected by the abbot of Clairvaux [“De monacho Populeti qui a quodam iudeo litteras hebraicas didicisse dicitur, abbati Claraevallis committitur ut inquirat et corrigat.”] See *Statuta Capitulum Generalium Ordinis Cisterciensis*, ed. D. Josephus-Mia Canivez, Bibliothèque de la Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique, fasc. 9 (2 vols.; Louvain: 1933), 1:227. It is only slightly more surprising that a statute from 1232 (1232, 51) chastises a certain abbot of Wilhering (Austria) because he admitted Jews frequently to his table! That Jews continued to provide instruction in Hebrew to Christian scholars, however, is cited by R. Yehiel at the Paris disputation of 1240 as a positive sign of Jewish and Christian relations. For the relevant passage, see *Judaism on Trial: Jewish-Christian Disputations in the Middle Ages*, ed. and trans. Hyam Maccoby (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1982), p. 161.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Gilbert Dahan, *Les intellectuels Chrétiens et les Juifs au moyen âge* (Paris: Les éditions du cerf, 1990), pp. 271f.

eleventh century (to become one of the most influential medieval polemics against Jews)<sup>21</sup> or Odo of Tournai's *Disputation with a Jew named Leo on the advent of Christ, the Son of God*,<sup>22</sup> written in the first decade of the twelfth century.

The civil tone of such polemics, however, would not last. By the end of the twelfth century, several Christian polemical treatises had assumed a more vicious tone, e.g. Peter Alphonsi's *Dialogues of a Christian and a Jew*,<sup>23</sup> which displays the religious zeal of a Jewish convert to Christianity, or Peter the Venerable's *Against the Inveterate Stubbornness of the Jews*.<sup>24</sup> The single most positive function that Augustine thought Jews performed, viz. that they would preserve and carry with them the text and the Law of the Old Testament, came to be seen as having been abandoned by Jews themselves through their devotion now to the Talmud rather than the Bible. Indeed, Peter the Venerable (ca. 1092-1156) was apparently the first Christian polemicist to refer directly to the Jews' dependence on the Talmud,<sup>25</sup> and, despairing even of the Jews' capacity for reason, he concluded that no hope remained that they might be persuaded to see the truth of Christianity any more than the brute beast could be persuaded. With Peter, Langmuir remarks, not only had the fear of the Jew become irrational but even the Jew himself!<sup>26</sup>

Peter the Venerable had not entirely departed from the Augustinian model, although his tolerance for Jews is barely noticeable. Like Augustine, Peter insists that "God wishes them not to be killed" but adds that they are to be "preserved in a life worse than death, like Cain the fratricide . . ."<sup>27</sup> The reason for such Christian forbearance, however, has shifted. They are

<sup>21</sup> The text of Gilbert's *Disputatio Judei* may be found in Migne's, PL 159: 1005-1036. For a new edition, see *The Works of Gilbert Crispin*, ed. Anna Sapir Abulafia and G.R. Evans (London: Oxford University Press, 1986). On the influence of Gilbert's *Disputation* upon both Christian and Jewish polemicists, see David Berger, "Gilbert Crispin, Alan of Lille, and Jacob ben Reuben," *Speculum* 49 (1974): 34-47; and, Avrom Saltman, "Gilbert Crispin as a Source of the Anti-Jewish Polemic of the *Ysagoge in Theologiam*," *Bar-Ilan Studies in History* 7 (1984): 89-99. While it remains unclear whether Gilbert's Jewish interlocutor represents a real figure, there seems to be little doubt that the dialogue responds in some way to real concerns that arose from contact between Jews and Christians. For a discussion of the character of the Jewish interlocutor, as well as the date for the text, see also R.J. Zwi Werblowsky, "Crispin's Disputation," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 11 (1960): 69-77; and, Anna Sapir Abulafia, "An Attempt by Gilbert Crispin, Abbot of Westminster, at Rational Argument in the Jewish-Christian Debate," *Studia Monastica* 26 (1984): 55-75.

<sup>22</sup> For Odo's text, see PL 160: 1103-1112. A translation of this text is available in my *Two Theological Treatises of Odo of Tournai: On Original Sin, and a Disputation with a Jew named Leo on the advent of Christ, the Son of God* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994).

<sup>23</sup> *Dialogi ex Judeo Christiani*, PL 157: 535-672.

<sup>24</sup> See Peter the Venerable, *Adversus Judeorum inveteratam duritiem*, ed. Yvonne Friedman, CC CM vol. 58 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1985). This text can be dated to the fourth decade of the twelfth century.

<sup>25</sup> See Friedman's remarks in *Adversus Judeorum inveteratam duritiem*, p. xv.

<sup>26</sup> See Langmuir, *Towards a Definition of Anti-Semitism*, ch. 8.

<sup>27</sup> Langmuir, p. 201, quoted from the *Letters of Peter the Venerable*, ed. Giles Constable, (2 vols.; Cambridge, MA: 1971), 1: 328-330, no. 130.

to survive in order to be exploited for Christian aims. Thus, the Cluniac abbot wrote to the king, "Let their lives be spared and their money taken away, so that the audacity of the infidel Saracens may be conquered by the right hands of Christians, aided by the money of the blaspheming Jews. . . ." <sup>28</sup>

By the end of the twelfth or certainly the beginning of the thirteenth century, then, the earlier tolerance of medieval Christendom for Jews had been dramatically shaken. Popular fears, evidenced in the twelfth century by the appearance of ritual murder charges,<sup>29</sup> economic resentment arising from the association of Jews with moneylending, as well as the growing tendency to identify Jews as heretics because of their alleged abandonment of biblical religion for the Talmud, all conspired to undermine Christian tolerance for and protection of Jewish communities. Although Grayzel may have suffered from an excess of precision when he proclaimed that the turning point occurs during the papacy of Innocent III, i.e. at the beginning of the thirteenth century, nevertheless he is quite correct that during Innocent's papacy the bull *Sicut Judeis*, which, under earlier popes, had constituted a "bull of protection" for Jewish communities, had become so severely weakened that "the *Sicut* bull was reduced to little more than an exhortation that for the sake of tradition, Christians ought not to kill the Jews in their midst, even though their presence is intolerable." By the middle of the thirteenth century, he adds, little more was left of this model for papal protection "than that living Jews, when all was peaceful around them, could not be compelled to accept baptism, and that dead Jews might remain in their cemeteries undisturbed." <sup>30</sup>

Pressure on the Jews increased. In 1242, twenty-four cartloads of the Talmud, the perceived basis for the Jewish departure from the Mosaic religion<sup>31</sup> and the source of Jewish blasphemies against Christianity, were burned in Paris,<sup>32</sup> perhaps signalling ecclesiastical awareness that Judaism was a dynamic entity that had evolved beyond the religious *stasis* Augustine envisioned. In the latter part of the thirteenth century Jewish leaders were compelled to

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> For an excellent study of the origins of charges of ritual murder in Europe, which first appear in Thomas of Monmouth's *Life and Passion of St. William the Martyr of Norwich* in the second half of the twelfth century, see Langmuir, *Towards a Definition of Anti-Semitism*, ch. 9. Although frequently confused with the blood libel, Langmuir argues that this charge properly speaking appears only later in the thirteenth century (see his ch. 13).

<sup>30</sup> Solomon Grayzel, *The Church and the Jews in the XIIIth Century*, ed. Kenneth Stow, vol. 2: 1254-1314 (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), pp. 6, 11.

<sup>31</sup> See Benjamin Z. Kedar, "Canon Law and the Burning of the Talmud," *Bulletin of Medieval Canon Law* 9 (1979): 78-83.

<sup>32</sup> For the history of the burning of the Talmud, and its basis, see Joel E. Rembaum, "The Talmud and the Popes: Reflections on the Talmud Trials of the 1240's," *Viator* 13 (1982): 203-223; and Judah M. Rosenthal, "The Talmud on Trial. The Disputation at Paris in the Year 1240," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, n.s. 47 (1956): 58-76; 145-69.

engage in several public disputations, while the peace of Jewish synagogues was regularly disturbed by compulsory sermons proclaimed by members of the new mendicant orders.<sup>33</sup> By the end of the Middle Ages, Jews had been expelled altogether from most European nations and the center of Jewish life would pass beyond western Europe.

The argument as to whether in the thirteenth century a new ideology of Jews and Judaism had appeared in the Church that explains these changes, or whether the Augustinian principle of toleration had merely been so severely weakened that it could hardly function any longer, is beyond the scope of this paper.<sup>34</sup> Here I intend to examine one of the two Augustinian principles that had supported toleration of the Jews—namely, that the Jews had preserved the *Hebraica veritas*, i.e. the true text of the Hebrew Bible. I am hopeful that I can demonstrate: 1. that this principle represents only one aspect of a more complicated perception of the relationship between Jews and the text of the Bible; 2. that alongside this view there had always existed another, namely that the Jews were responsible for *corrupting* or *falsifying* the biblical text; and, 3. that the premise of Jewish falsification of scripture becomes, unexpectedly, both more sophisticated and more important in the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries, thereby undermining the Augustinian model.

## II. *The Early Church and the Establishment of a Biblical Text*

The Church's struggle to determine both the appropriate hermeneutic and the authoritative text of the Jewish Bible in its first few centuries brought it into direct conflict with the Jewish world. This conflict, which revealed quickly not only that Jews and Christians were reading divergent texts but, even more disturbingly, that Christian texts differed from one another, focused Origen's (ca. 185-ca. 254) attention, for example, upon the need for a critical text. Although early biblical scholars acknowledged the pressing need for corrections, Christian communities were still largely unprepared for the task

<sup>33</sup> On the very important role of the friars in this story, see the excellent study by Jeremy Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982).

<sup>34</sup> The claim for the demise of this Augustinian model is made most consistently by Jeremy Cohen and, more recently, Shlomo Simonsohn, both of whom recognize the appearance of a new and dangerous ideology of Judaism in the thirteenth century. Cohen's argument for the appearance of a new ideology of Judaism, however, has been attacked consistently by Robert Chazan. See his *Daggers of Faith. Thirteenth-Century Missionizing and Jewish Response* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1989), ch. 9 and his "The Condemnation of the Talmud Reconsidered (1239-1248)," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 45 (1988): 11-30. My argument in this paper, however, only draws attention to the fact that even under Augustine's formula, by the thirteenth century Jews were perceived as far from successful in satisfying the mission remaining for them in the divine economy.



of establishing the biblical text. While by the fourth century ecumenical councils had gathered in order to attempt to establish some uniformity in doctrinal matters, the production of the biblical texts themselves—upon which doctrine was, in principle, based—seems to have remained very much a local affair, without the quality controls necessary to prevent the proliferation of even more variant texts.<sup>35</sup> The earliest extant Christian biblical manuscripts were not copied by professional scribes,<sup>36</sup> and, as a result, not having established detailed rules or explicit qualifications for the transcribers of the biblical text, the early Church was unable to regulate the production of its own sacred texts. Coming only much later, in the fourth century, was the Emperor Constantine's insistence upon professional transcription of the Scriptures.<sup>37</sup> But by then the damage had been done. Jerome (ca. 342-420) complains of the almost innumerable Latin translations and copies of the biblical text, whose translators or copyists seemed to add or subtract verses from the text at will.<sup>38</sup> Perhaps chastened by experience, Constantine's instructions must have appeared as too little and too late.

Even if such controls had existed earlier, the question of the proper model or Ur-text remained unsolved. The special nimbus of sanctity that surrounded the Greek Septuagint raised a seemingly insurmountable barrier for any editor who wished to return, (as Jerome did) to the *Hebraica veritas*. Since Jerome himself chose to prepare a new Latin translation of the Old Testament to improve upon the Septuagint, his claims for the Septuagint are more modest than those of many of his contemporaries, among whom the legend for

---

<sup>35</sup> While yet recognizing, as Speyer does, the possibility of a dialectical relationship, that is, that decisions about doctrine also determined the value of certain texts, focusing attention upon them. See Wolfgang Speyer, *Die literarische Fälschung im heidnischen und christlichen Altertum* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1971), p. 201. The assumption, however, that doctrine is generated from the text and not the other way around requires reconsideration. For the New Testament, at least, Bart Ehrman argues that "scribes occasionally altered the words of their sacred texts in order to make them more patently orthodox and to prevent their misuse by Christians who espoused aberrant views." See his *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture. The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament*. (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. xi.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. C.H. Roberts, "Books in the Græco-Roman World and the New Testament," in *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 1: *From the Beginnings to St. Jerome*, eds. P.R. Ackroyd and C.F. Evans (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 62.

<sup>37</sup> Eusebius, in his *Life of Constantine*, remarks that Constantine, noting the remarkable growth of Christianity in Eusebius' area, instructed him to increase the number of churches there and "to order fifty copies of the sacred scriptures . . . to be written on prepared parchment in a legible manner, and in a convenient, portable form, by professional transcribers thoroughly practiced in their art." See Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, 36, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, 2nd ser., vol. 1 (reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1952), p. 549.

<sup>38</sup> "cum apud Latinos tot sint exemplaria, quot codices; et unusquisque pro arbitrio suo vel addiderit, vel subtraxerit quod ei visum est; et utique non possit verum esse quod dissonat." *Praefatio Hieronymi in Librum Josue ben Nun*, PL 28: 463A.

its miraculous production became more and more inflated. A good example is Eugippus (d. 533), who remarks that the Jews respect Jerome's translation as the truest, and claim that the Septuagint has many errors. But the Church insists that no other translation should have authority unless it is in accord with the Septuagint, since the divine spirit appeared among its 72 translators. While some, he adds, think that the Septuagint ought to be corrected in light of the Hebrew, still, they have not dared to remove from their copies what is not in the Hebrew, but have only added what is found in the Hebrew and not in the Septuagint, marking these additions with an asterisk. Whatever is in the Septuagint but not in the Hebrew is there because God chose to speak through the later translators with the spirit of prophecy, rather than through the authors of the Hebrew texts!<sup>39</sup>

Yet so long as the Septuagint or its Latin derivatives [the *Vetus Latina*] provided the received Christian texts of the Hebrew Bible, the apologetic and missionary effort of the Church would become hopelessly complicated. These versions clearly departed in some important instances from texts used in Jewish communities, not only those using Hebrew or Aramaic versions, but also those which used later Greek translations (based on the work of Aquila or another translator).<sup>40</sup> Christian and Jewish texts differed, then, and some of the texts most useful to support Christian messianism and evangelization were at the center of the controversy.

Faced with these difficulties, it is perhaps not surprising that some Christian apologists quickly turned to a useful polemical device: namely, that where textual variants appeared these differences could often be traced to religious or sectarian animus. Thus, if Christian texts departed from Jewish versions, whether Hebrew or Greek, it was because Jews had deliberately falsified their own copies in order to undermine Christian truth. When Justin Martyr (ca. 100-ca. 165) discovered that certain verses he had found in the books of Ezra or Jeremiah—texts supporting messianic claims made on behalf of Jesus—were unknown to his Jewish interlocutor, Trypho, he concluded that the Jews must only lately have excised and deleted these passages from Scripture because of their enmity toward the Christian community.<sup>41</sup> Justin's

<sup>39</sup> "quicquid est in Hebraeis codicibus, et non est apud interpretes Septuaginta, noluit ea [hoc] per istos, sed per illos prophetas Dei Spiritus dicere; quicquid vero est apud Septuaginta, in Hebraeis autem codicibus non est, per istos ea maluit, quam per illos idem Spiritus dicere, sic ostendens utrosque fuisse prophetas." Eugippus, *Thesaurus*, 329, PL 62: 1049D-1050D.

<sup>40</sup> On current research into the Septuagint and other Greek translations of the Jewish Scriptures, see Emanuel Tov, "Jewish Greek Scriptures," in *Early Judaism and its Modern Interpreters*, eds. Robert A. Kraft and George W.F. Nickelsburg (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1986): 223-238.

<sup>41</sup> See Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho*, 72, in *St. Justin Martyr: The First Apology, the Second Apology, Dialogue with Trypho, Exhortation to the Greeks, Discourse to the Greeks, and The Monarchy or*

accusation, which Trypho finds incredible, is based in part on later efforts of the Jewish community to discredit the Septuagint by bringing out rival Greek translations, which frequently depart from the Septuagint.<sup>42</sup> In other cases, however, the passages that Justin cites as having been deleted from the Septuagint cannot be found there or in any other biblical manuscripts. "In fact," remarked Jean Daniélou, "they never formed part of it [the Bible]; they are Christian *midrashim*."<sup>43</sup>

Perhaps it should not surprise us that Christian *midrashim* entered into Christian *testimonia* and the transmission of the sacred texts, nor that such *midrashim* resulted in a charge of Jewish tampering when it became evident that they enjoyed no recognition from a Jewish audience. Yet even Origen, who was most fully aware not only of the degree to which Christian texts diverged from Jewish models but also aware of the extent to which they disagreed with one another, did not avoid the polemical conclusion altogether. In his commentary on Jeremiah 17:1, he notes that the Hebrew text and the Septuagint differ markedly on this passage and several following. Since he prefers the reading in the Hebrew text, Origen concludes that the Jews must have falsified some of the exemplars[of the Greek text].<sup>44</sup> Similarly, in a letter to Julius Africanus he remarks that when faced with confusion in the biblical text, one must "coax the Jews, and persuade them to give us copies which shall be untampered with and free from forgery," a remark that suggests again that he too accepted the charge that Jews had falsified

---

*the Rule of God*, trs. by Thomas B. Falls (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1965), pp. 263-64. For the Greek text, cf. PG 6: 641-644. In notes 1 and 3 to this chapter, Falls identifies other authors, namely Irenaeus and Lactantius, who cite the same passages from "Scripture," but notes the difficulty of identifying the origin of these verses.

<sup>42</sup> Thus, Justin remarks: "I am far from putting reliance in your teachers who refuse to admit that the interpretation made by the seventy elders who were with Ptolemy is a correct one; and they attempt to frame another. And I wish you to observe that they have altogether taken away many Scriptures from the translations effected by the seventy elders who were with Ptolemy." *Dialogue*, 71. Justin's remark may correctly reflect Jewish efforts in the first few centuries of this era to eliminate or control rival redactions of the Hebrew text. Thus, as Ginsburg notes, despite Jewish traditions that support the notion of the miraculous production of the Septuagint, other scribal traditions prefer to describe the day on which the Septuagint was produced as a day of national calamity. See C.D. Ginsburg, *Introduction to the Masoretico-Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible* (1906; reprint New York: KTAV, 1966), p. 306.

<sup>43</sup> Jean Daniélou, *Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture*, trs. John Austin Baker (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1973), p. 215. For additional examples and a further discussion of Christian *midrashim* entering into a dialogue on the Scriptures, see his *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, trs. John Austin Baker (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1964), pp. 97-107.

<sup>44</sup> Origen, *In Jeremiah homilia*, 16.10, PG 13: 451. It is noteworthy that Origen does not himself attribute such alterations to the text to Jewish hostility toward Christianity. It is the editor of this text in Migne who does so, remarking that Origen attributes the absence of these verses in the LXX to the perfidy of later Jews who corrupted the exemplars of the LXX ["Judacorum posteriorum temeritati ac perfidiae tribuit Origenes, ab eisque plurima LXX Interpretatum exemplaria fuisse corrupta queritur . . ."] PG 13: 451-2, n. 1.

or altered the biblical text.<sup>45</sup> This conclusion is supported by Origen's apologist, Rufinus (ca. 345-410), who remarks that Origen undertook his Hexapla in order to refute Jews and apostates. In particular, "Because they lied that in our Scriptures a considerable number of passages had been changed, or were lacking or added on, Origen wanted to show to us what sort of text of Scripture the Jews possessed . . . so that we might know that it was not by us that passages were lacking or added on but by the Jews who were vying with us."<sup>46</sup>

Jewish criticism of the Septuagint seemed to some Christians as well merely to confirm this suspicion of tampering. Indeed, Jewish efforts to produce alternative Greek translations *are* probably a response to Jewish-Christian encounters. It may have been R. Akiba himself, in the second century, who persuaded Aquila to produce a new Greek translation (ca. 140) of the Hebrew Bible in order to refute Christian claims based on the Septuagint.<sup>47</sup> Since Christians in the early Church accepted an expanded version of the legend found in the *Letter of [Ps.] Aristeas* that proposed that the Septuagint had been translated by Jewish scholars under divine inspiration and guidance<sup>48</sup> or through the Holy Spirit, such Jewish efforts appeared suspicious.<sup>49</sup> By the fifth century, the legendary accounts of the miraculous production of the Septuagint achieved their fullest embellishment in the work of Epiphanius (d. 403), who provided colorful historical detail describing the conditions under which seventy-two translators worked at the court of Ptolemy. While recognizing that the Septuagint departs often from the Hebrew when the two are compared, Epiphanius adds an ingenious explanation. After the translators had concluded their work, a representative of each of thirty-six "teams" were brought before the king, with as many copies of their work, which were then compared with the Hebrew original. Each of them recited their Greek translation. No discrepancies among them were found. But then a divine miracle became evident. For it happened that when one had added

<sup>45</sup> Origen, *Ad Africanum*, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, vol. 4 (reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1968) p. 381.

<sup>46</sup> "vel immutata esse aliquanta, vel deesse, vel abundare in nostris Scripturis mentiebantur, voluit Origenes nostris ostendere, qualis apud Iudaeos Scripturarum lectio teneretur . . . ut sciremus non quod nobis, sed quid Iudeis adversum nos certantibus, aut deesse, aut abundare videretur." Rufinus, *Apologiae in Sanctum Hieronymum* 2.36, PL 21: 615.

<sup>47</sup> See Samuel Sandmel, *Judaism and Christian Beginnings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 247.

<sup>48</sup> For an early Jewish source for this legend, see Josephus *Against Apion* 2.45, and his *Jewish Antiquities* 12.6-12.7. Hilary of Poitiers (d. 367), *Tractatus in II Psalmum*, PL 9: 263B-264B; Ps. Augustine, *De mirabilibus sacrae scripturae* PL 35: 2161A; and Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiarum* 6.4.2 all transmit to the Middle Ages the expanded legend of the miraculous origins of the Septuagint, giving it a special authority.

<sup>49</sup> Tertullian, *Apologeticus adv. Gentes* 18, PL 1: 378-380.

something that was not found in the Hebrew original, *all* had done so; where one had deleted something, *all* had done so. Whatever had been deleted was unimportant, but whatever had been added was absolutely necessary!<sup>50</sup> Even apart from the legend of its miraculous production, evidence that the apostles had used and quoted the Septuagint in the texts of the New Testament confirmed further its authority, and implied as well that it had had the same authority among those Jews who, in the first century, became believers in Christian claims.<sup>51</sup>

Jewish efforts to correct a translation which Jewish tradition itself had once viewed as inspired, which now Christians alleged had not only been prepared under God's supervision, as it were, but had also been endorsed by the apostles themselves, easily suggested to many a conspiracy of Jewish falsification.<sup>52</sup> Thus, at the end of the fourth century John Chrysostom (d. 407) condemned Jewish translations after the Septuagint as part of a Jewish plot, arguing that "the seventy [translators of the Septuagint] were justly entitled to confidence above all the others. For these [others] made their translation after Christ's coming, continuing to be Jews, and may justly be suspected as having spoken in enmity, and as darkening the prophecies on purpose . . ."<sup>53</sup> John Chrysostom was not alone in adding that for this reason the Septuagint, then, is the text each Church should rightly employ.<sup>54</sup> This conclusion was strengthened by traditions that stigmatized the later Jewish translators of the Old Testament as either apostates from Christianity or pagan proselytes who had some personal motive, as John Chrysostom suggests, to darken the prophecies on purpose and promote their judaizing heresies.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Epiphanius, *Liber de mensuris et ponderibus*, 6, PG 43: 237ff. Although written in Greek, this text was translated into Latin by the seventh century (when Isidore of Seville utilized it) and was very popular throughout the Middle Ages. Cf. Eugippus, *Thesaurus*, 328-329, PL 62: 1049-1050.

<sup>51</sup> See Augustine's *Epist.* 71.4, PL 33: 243. Medieval readers made the same observation. Cf. Herveus of Bourgdieu (d. ca. 1149-1150), *Commentaria in Epistolas divi Pauli—In Epist. ad Romanos*, 12, PL 181: 773A; and his *Commentaria in Epistolas divi Pauli—In Epist. ad Hebraeos*, 1, PL 181: 1525D.

<sup>52</sup> Barthélemy suggests that the ultimate origin of the Septuagint legend in the Jewish world should be located in the work of the pre-Christian Jewish apologist, Aristobolus. He also traces the influence of this legend among the Fathers and rabbinic tradition. See Dominique Barthélemy, "Pourquoi la torah a-t-elle été traduite en Grec?" in *On Language, Culture, and Religion: In Honor of Eugene A. Nida*, eds. Matthew Black and William Smalley (The Hague; Paris: Mouton, 1974): 23-41.

<sup>53</sup> John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew*, 5.4, trs. George Prevost, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, cd. Philip Schaff, vol. 10 (New York: 1888), p. 32.

<sup>54</sup> See also Eugippus, *Thesaurus*, 328-29, PL 62: 1049-1050; and, in the early Middle Ages, Julian of Toledo's *De comprobatione aetatis sextae, libri tres*, 3.16, PL 96: 576D. It is worth noting that Julian was himself the son of Jewish converts to Christianity.

<sup>55</sup> Thus, for Irenaeus these later translations were done by Jewish proselytes who hoped to support Judaizing heresies. Cf. his *Against Heresies* 3.21.3. For the various and sometimes

Admittedly, other Christian writers in the early Church sought an explanation for the discordant nature of editions of the Bible that did not presuppose a Jewish conspiracy of false emendation. These explanations follow various paths, but at least avoid imputing malicious intent to the Jews. For example, in his letter to Julius Africanus, Origen acknowledges that the Greek text of Daniel contains approximately two-hundred verses not in the Hebrew version, including the story of Susannah. Such differences he found in other books as well, including Esther and Job.<sup>56</sup> Although he is willing to admit that the Jews may have, out of self-interest, deleted the story of Susannah from the book of Daniel in order "to hide from the knowledge of the people as many of the passages which contained any scandal against the elders, rulers, and judges as they could,"<sup>57</sup> such emendations were not evidently undertaken as an attack on Christianity.<sup>58</sup>

Moreover, Origen is not alone in recognizing that the later translations of Symmachus and Theodotion occasionally contain a reading of the Old Testament that supports Christian teaching better than does the Septuagint.<sup>59</sup> Eusebius also remarks frequently on the number of occasions on which the translations of Symmachus and Theodotion provide better support for Christian messianism than does the Septuagint, while the latter remains more "obscure."<sup>60</sup> Jerome too, at one point, acknowledges that even Aquila's translation is on occasion more supportive of Christian messianic claims than either the Hebrew text, the Septuagint, or other translations, prompting him to remark that "Aquila the Jew has translated like a Christian."<sup>61</sup>

Such obscurity, however, in the Septuagint is not the result of a defect so much as a product of providential design. The translators of the Septuagint, it is alleged, prudently omitted or altered numerous passages in their translation that otherwise might have offended their patron, Ptolemy. While this explanation is found in Eusebius, it becomes even more pronounced in

---

contradictory information found among patristic authors regarding the identity of these translators, cf. August Bludau, *Die Schriftfälschungen der Häretiker. Ein Beitrag zur Textkritik der Bibel*, in *Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen*, ed. M. Meinertz (Münster: Aschendorff, 1925) 11, 5, pp. 14-16.

<sup>56</sup> Origen notes "many places I found in Job where our copies have more than the Hebrew ones, sometimes a little more, and sometimes a great deal more . . ." See his *Ad Africanum*, 9, p. 387.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 388.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. *supra*, on. 44, on the role of Migne's editor in suggesting a different conclusion.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. his *In Jeremiam Homilia* 16.10, PG 13: 449-51.

<sup>60</sup> For a fine study of this element in Eusebius and, later, Jerome, see especially Dominique Barthélemy, "Eusèbe, la Septante, et 'les autres,'" in *La bible et les pères*, Bibliothèque des Centres d'études supérieures spécialisés (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1971): 51-65.

<sup>61</sup> Jerome, *Commentariorum in Abacuc* 2.3, PL 25: 1326C. At the same time, he remarks that some churches received the book of Daniel according to the translation of Theodotion, suggesting again that some perceived in it a better support for Christian interpretation. See his *Praefatio Hieronymi in Librum Josue ben Nun*, PL 28: 464A.

Jerome's work. For Jerome, the Jewish translators were unwilling to reveal to King Ptolemy of Alexandria certain mysteries contained in the Holy Scriptures, and especially those which refer to the Trinity or promise the advent of Christ, lest the Jews appear to worship a second god. Such passages would have grievously offended Ptolemy, whose interest in the Jewish Scriptures stemmed in part from their support for his own philosophical monotheism.<sup>62</sup> In his preface to the Pentateuch, Jerome suggests that this tradition of the intentional obscurity of the translators of the Septuagint, found even among the Jews, serves as a justification for his effort to return to the Hebrew text for his translation—in order to discover again those Christian truths which the translators of the Septuagint concealed.<sup>63</sup>

While these witnesses acknowledge Jewish emendations to the Septuagint, they do not attribute these emendations to Jewish antipathy or hostility toward Christians. At worst, an understandable self-interest or prudence guided them. Augustine is even more restrained. While he notes that discrepancies between the Septuagint and both the Hebrew text and later Greek translations are attributed frequently by Christians to the mendacity of the Jews, what should be believed, he inquires: that the Jews, who have been so widely dispersed for so many years should be able to conspire together to delete the truth from the text, or that the seventy translators, who were also Jews and gathered together in one place and at one time, should have conspired to do so? Viewed in this way, it would seem more reasonable to assume that it was the Septuagint that had been intentionally corrupted. In fact, Augustine suggests, one must dismiss both explanations and simply ascribe these discrepancies to scribal error and not to malice or perversity on the part of the Jews,<sup>64</sup> since Augustine can identify no plausible *motive* for Jewish falsification of Scripture.<sup>65</sup> Even if one could identify such a motive, had Jews been guilty of falsifying the Scriptures prior to the New Testament era, Jerome

<sup>62</sup> See Jerome's *Herbraicae quaestiones in libro Geneseos*, CCSL 72 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1959), p. 2.

<sup>63</sup> Jerome, *Praefatio in Pentateuchum*, PL 28: 147f. For additional passages from Jerome that cite this tradition, cf. *Commentarioli in Psalmos*, 9, PL suppl. 2: 39; *Tractatus in Psalmos* 14, PL suppl. 2: 201; and his *Praefatio Hieronymi in librum Isaiae*, PL 28: 772. In fact, the claim that this tradition was current among the Jews also has support. Barthélemy points out that the *Mekhilla of R. Ishmael ben Elisha* (redacted 3rd century), a midrash on Exodus, includes a list of passages of the torah which had been modified when they were conveyed to Ptolemy. See his "Eusèbe, la Septante, et 'les autres,'" p. 63. Jerome's claims on behalf of the inspired character of the Septuagint are also a good deal more modest. He repeats Josephus' remark that only the Pentateuch had been translated, and he distinguishes sharply between the work of translators and the inspired utterances of a prophet (cf. *Praefatio in Pentateuchum*, PL 28: 151). One is inclined to think that the only thing they have in common is that both receive little thanks.

<sup>64</sup> Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 15.13, CCSL 48 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1955).

<sup>65</sup> Augustine, *Epist.* 82, 5.34, PL 33: 290-91.

adds, Jesus or the apostles would have certainly publicly condemned them for having done so.<sup>66</sup>

This last argument from silence was preserved among medieval authors by the Venerable Bede (d. 735), who, discussing discrepancies in the chronologies found in the Septuagint and the Hebrew Bible, remarked "if someone shall say that the Hebrew books were falsified by the Jews later and that because they are jealous of our authorities they have removed the truth from them, let him hear what Origen answered regarding this little question in the seventh book of his commentary on Isaiah, that the Lord and the apostles, who accuse the scribes and pharisees of other crimes, never accused them of this, the greatest crime. [And] let him hear Josephus, who . . . showed that the Holy Scriptures had never been falsified by the Jewish people." Finally, Bede repeats Jerome's claim that it is not the Hebrew so much as the Greek codices that have been corrupted. If this were not the case, there would be no point to returning to the Hebrew text in order to discover the truth of Scripture, as he had been urged to do.<sup>67</sup>

Two points of view, then, have emerged from the patristic and early medieval periods. One of these perceives textual corruption as an issue primarily concerned with the integrity of the Greek translations of Scripture. Such corruptions as are evident in the Greek codices are said to have originated in one of two ways as well. In one, the Jewish translators of the Septuagint are said to have altered many of its passages, although not from some animosity toward Christianity—which did not exist at that time—but in order not to offend their patron, Ptolemy. For another, corruptions to the text of the Old Testament may also be attributed to unintentional scribal error, since later Greek translations—also thought to have been produced by Jews—sometimes provide better evidence for Christian claims than either the Hebrew or the Septuagint. Both of these explanations for textual variants may be present in the same author, and neither supposes Jewish animosity toward Christianity to be particularly relevant.

A second view, however, focuses its attention especially on the later Greek translations of the Hebrew Bible, i.e. those produced after the New Testament era. Rather than finding in them additional support for Christian claims—as Jerome and others often do—proponents of this view draw attention to their failure to support certain Christian doctrines that find bet-

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Jerome, *Comm. ad Isaiam* 3, PL 24: 101.

<sup>67</sup> "Si aliquis dixerit Hebraeos libros postea a Judaeis esse falsatos, eosque dum nostris invident auctoritatibus sibi abstulisse veritatem, audiet Origenem quid in septimo [volumine] explanationum Isaiae, huic respondit quaestiunculae, quod numquam Dominus et Apostoli, qui caetera crimina arguunt in Scribis et Phariseis, de hoc crimine, quod erat maximum, reticuisent. Audiat Josephum . . . qui . . . monstravit . . . nequaquam Scripturas sanctam a Judaeorum gente esse falsatos." *Epist.* 3, *Ad Plegvinum*, PL 94: 671C.



ter support in the Septuagint. Here, the translators of these later editions *are* perceived to be animated by a religious hostility and as having worked consciously to undermine Christian truths. Certainly, Justin Martyr, as well as John Chrysostom and Rufinus, seem to represent this view. For them, malicious intent—even a Jewish conspiracy—were at the bottom of Jewish emendations to the text of Scripture and were associated with a tragic flaw in the Jewish character first revealed in the episode of the Golden Calf. Ever since, Jews have been turning a blind eye to divine truth. They murdered the prophets sent to them (itself largely an extra-biblical tradition, suggesting an entirely distinct conspiracy) and, ultimately, the messiah himself.<sup>68</sup> What more could be expected from such a people who, from generation to generation, had attempted to subvert God's truth?<sup>69</sup>

Textual variants and the disagreements they had produced among Christians and Jewish-Christians or "judaizing" heretics were ultimately rooted in the same flaw. In the Church's conflict with the Emperor Julian (d. 363), known among Christian historians as the Apostate, the same charge appears. Although Julian abandoned Christianity in order to revive the religious traditions of ancient Rome, he was perceived as being friendly toward the Jews. Perhaps it is this association that led the ecclesiastical historian Socrates to accuse Julian, like the Jews, of having falsified and corrupted the Scriptures in order to stem the spreading tide of Christian faith.<sup>70</sup> Thus, the polemical charge of falsification provided enviable leverage in all manner of conflicts.<sup>71</sup>

---

<sup>68</sup> As Rosemary Radford Ruether demonstrates, this charge that the Jews murdered the prophets was a useful instrument for the Church in the *adversus Judaeos* literature, to show that Jewish apostasy—consummated in the rejection of Jesus—could be traced back throughout Jewish history. Yet the basis for this charge in Matt. 23: 29-30 is not to be located in the Hebrew Scriptures but rather in extra-biblical literature. See her *Faith and Fratricide. The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Seabury Press, 1974), pp. 124-131. Although the charge of killing the prophets is also found in Rabbinic midrash, Betsy Halpern Amaru has shown that the charge of propheticide functions very differently in the Jewish community: i.e. as a doctrine of comfort for Jewish martyrs during the wars with Rome in the first and second centuries. Just as the killing of the prophets did not go unavenged by God, so too the murder of martyred rabbis at the hands of the Romans, who had replaced the prophets and priests as leaders of Israel, would not go unavenged. See her "The Killing of the Prophets: Unraveling a Midrash," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 54 (1983): 153-180.

<sup>69</sup> For this argument, see August Bludau, *Die Schriftfälschungen der Häretiker*, 11, 5, pp. 80-82.

<sup>70</sup> Socrates Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.23, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* ed. Philip Schaff, vol. 2 (New York: 1888), p. 92. Ehrman remarks that Orthodox hirsilologists frequently attacked the heretics for every manner of forgery. He cites Dionysius of Corinth, who remarked: "It is therefore no wonder that some [heretics] have even attempted to falsify the Scriptures of the Lord, when they have done the same in writings that were not at all their equal." *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, p. 26, quoted from Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 4.23.

<sup>71</sup> Even medieval authors complained that heretics in the early Church were guilty of "erasing" certain verses from the Scriptures in order to support their error. Cf. Hincmar of Rheims, *De una et trina deitate*, 2, Pl. 125: 526D.

It is perhaps the benefits realized from this leverage that helped obscure fundamental flaws in the argument. Not least of these is that the Jews, in falsifying all the texts of the Old Testament, would also be corrupting their *own* tradition. Yet, for some Christian readers, familiar additions to the text of the Old Testament (in the form of Christian *midrashim*) as well as numerous New Testament quotations of Scripture not found in the Hebrew Bible, or found there only in a different form,<sup>72</sup> *did* suggest evidence of criminal tampering and contradicted Augustine's insistence that the Jews continue to preserve the sacred texts which they themselves no longer understood.

### III. *The Middle Ages to the Thirteenth Century*

In the early medieval Latin world, both approaches outlined above to the charge of the Jewish emendation of Scripture survived. One of these continued to support a charge of malicious false emendation, despite the practical difficulties this entailed.<sup>73</sup> Another found little evidence to support such a charge and, as Augustine had, noted skeptically that as a practical matter a conspiracy of falsification would necessitate, at the very least, a systematic effort to gather all biblical texts in use in Jewish communities around the world for the purpose of altering them to confound Christian readers, while at the same time maintaining a conspiracy of silence.<sup>74</sup> Although errors appear in the textual tradition, these may better be attributed to scribal negligence than intentional corruption. When the Carolingian exegete, Rabanus Maurus (d. 856), noted the numerous discrepancies between the Septuagint and the Hebrew text, he confessed that he did not know whether these had appeared because the translators of the Septuagint had added something or whether the Jews had deleted something from the Hebrew. While he considers the latter possibility, he does not suggest that this would have been

<sup>72</sup> For a convenient summary of such passages, cf. Lillian C. Freudmann, *Antisemitism in the New Testament* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994), ch. 1.

<sup>73</sup> One notes that this contrast may have appeared more acute in the Latin world, which, because of Jerome's work, was forced to acknowledge differences between the Hebrew sources and the Christian textual tradition. This acknowledgement is not often present in Byzantine sources where, Jaroslav Pelikan notes, "the rabbis were represented as having accepted the Septuagint text even in passages where it contained mistranslations of the original or additions to it. . . . But there would seem to be reason to surmise that the Jewish participants in the actual dialogues were less docile in accepting the Septuagint and the 'Christian *midrashim*' than the printed accounts might indicate." Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition* vol. 2: *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom (600-1700)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), p. 207. As a literary and polemical device, then, an alternative to the charge of falsification certainly existed: Christian apologists could simply ignore Jewish criticism of the Septuagint and textual variants!

<sup>74</sup> A possibility which Augustine, for example, considers inherently implausible. See *De civitate Dei*, 15.13.

done from hostility toward Christianity.<sup>75</sup> On the contrary, Rabanus explains that, since the translators of the LXX were well aware of the Hebrew text, often the discrepancies between the Hebrew and the LXX conceal a mystery for Christians. So, when the LXX (Jonah 3:4) indicates that Ninevah will be laid waste in three days, but the Hebrew has forty days, the one is an allusion to the Resurrection and the other to the Ascension! Consequently, it is incorrect to suggest that one is false, and the other true.<sup>76</sup>

Yet while the idea of a Jewish conspiracy of textual corruption had appeared impossible to Augustine, some Christian polemicists did not consider the practical difficulties insurmountable. The Carolingian archbishop of Lyon, Amulo (d. 852), insists that Jews *had* sent out instructions across the seas, everywhere they live, to delete Ps. 19 from their liturgy precisely because it supported Christian claims about the advent of the messiah.<sup>77</sup> While he does not propose that the Jews have actually altered the text of the Scriptures in the same way, he does draw attention to the fact that even when they leave the text unchanged, they annotate it in such a way as to subvert Christian interpretations and hand down these annotations or glosses in an oral tradition as if these represented the "true" text.<sup>78</sup> The roughly contemporary Spanish layman, Paul Alvarez (b. ca. 800), who engaged in a polemical correspondence with the Christian convert to Judaism, Bodo-Eleazar,

<sup>75</sup> Rabanus Maurus seems to represent the more moderate position, even though he does suggest that the Jews have altered the Hebrew text. Rabanus notes that at Gal. 3:10 Paul quotes Deut. 27:26 "Cursed be he that does not maintain all the words of torah to do them"—differently than it appears either in the later Greek translations or the Hebrew. It is uncertain whether the LXX added words to the Hebrew reading, he remarks, accounting for the difference, or whether these were in the original Hebrew but the Jews deleted it. He concludes, however, that since the apostle was learned in Hebrew he would only have quoted the passage as he does if it were found thus in the Hebrew. ["Apostolus vir Hebraeae peritiæ et in lege doctissimus, numquam protulisset nisi in Hebreis voluminibus haberetur."] *Enarationum in Epp. Pauli libri XIV—In Epist. ad Galatas*, PL 112: 290CD.

<sup>76</sup> "Non ergo dicamus unum horum falsum esse, et pro aliis interpretibus adversus alios litigemus, cum et illi qui ex Hebraeo interpretantur, probant nobis hoc scriptum esse quod interpretantur; et LXX interpretum auctoritas, quæ tanto etiam divinitus facto miraculo commendatur, tanta in Ecclesiis vetustate firmetur." Rabanus Maurus, *Commentaria in Genesim* 4.16, PL 107: 667A-B.

<sup>77</sup> Thus, "Tulerunt igitur psalmum, qui per tot saccula in conventu synagogae quotidie inter caeteros fuerat decantatus, eumque usque in adventu Christi sui omni modo silendum esse decreverunt. . . ." Amulo, *Epistola, seu Liber contra Judaeos ad Carolum regem*, 10, PL 116: 147B. In the Vulgate, the offending passage is probably Ps. 19,7—"Now I know that the Lord has delivered his anointed one, and will hear him from his heavenly throne." Amulo's text should likely be dated to the year A.D. 846. For a good discussion of its aims and intentions, cf. Arthur J. Zuckerman, *A Jewish Princedom in Medieval France 768-900* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), pp. 300ff. For a discussion of the relationship between Amulo's text and the works of his predecessor, Agobard, see Alfred Raddatz, "Zur Vorgeschichte der 'Epistula seu liber contra Judaeos' Amulos von Lyon," in *Ecclesia Peregrinans. Josef Lenzenweger zum 70. Geburtstag* (Vienna: 1986): 53-57.

<sup>78</sup> *Epistola seu liber contra Judaeos ad Carolum regem*, 13, PL 116: 149A. Agobard also complains

goes further and asserts that "everyone knows that after the advent of Christ they [the Jews] falsified the Hebrew codices in order to suppress the clearest testimonies pertaining to Christ, for which they know they must be found guilty."<sup>79</sup>

The conversion of Bodo in A.D. 838, a deacon at the court of Louis the Pious, was a scandal that shocked the Christian world. Amulo also refers to Bodo, noting that having deserted the palace, his family, and Christendom, he has fled to Spain and there, living with the Jews, has been circumcized, married, and has changed his name from Bodo to Eleazar.<sup>80</sup> However, since Paul Alvarez could not have satisfied himself of such Jewish crimes, because he admits that he knows no Hebrew,<sup>81</sup> he must be merely repeating a tradition that has been handed down to him. More, what began as a polemical device utilized by Christian theologians had become, perhaps, a popular conspiracy theory, for Paul thinks it is sufficient to repeat what "everyone knows."

William Adler has argued in a recent article that this polemical attack based upon the premise of deliberate falsification threatened to obscure the pressing need within the Church for a critical study of the biblical text.<sup>82</sup> In his view, this need made increasingly expensive the polemical fruits and resulted in a gradual retreat from the charge, a retreat already visible in the works of Jerome, Augustine, and Bede. This is not to say that the accusation entirely disappeared, but only that there was a growing scepticism, perhaps fostered by Jerome, which looked for reasons for textual variations which had nothing to do with a program of systematic and deliberate falsification rooted in religious antagonism.

For the early Middle Ages, however, as already indicated, the evidence is mixed. While the examples provided above may be isolated ones, they do demonstrate that a bifurcated tradition persisted into the early Middle Ages.

---

of the "falsehoods" (invented by the elders among the Jews) that inform their understanding of the Old Testament and void the New Testament of its authority by circulating scurrilous tales about Jesus. See Agobard's *De judaicis superstitionibus*, 10, in *Opera omnia*, ed. L. Van Acker, CCCM 52 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1981).

<sup>79</sup> Paul Alvarez of Cordoba, *Epist.* 16, PL 121: 486D: "Codices namque Hebraeorum post adventum Christi falsatos esse nullus ignorat, ut testimonia evidentiora de Christo subtraherent, ex quibus se convincendos esse sciebant." The text may be dated from A.D. 840-841.

<sup>80</sup> Amulo, *Epistola seu liber contra Judaeos ad Carolum Regem*, 42, PL 116: 171C. For a discussion of possible motives for the conversion of Bodo-Eleazar, who had been court chaplain to Louis the Pious, see the discussion of Bernhard Blumenkranz, "Jüdische und christliche Konvertiten im jüdisch-christlichen Religionsgespräch des Mittelalters," in *Judentum im Mittelalter*, ed. Paul Wilpert (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1966), pp. 266ff.

<sup>81</sup> A fact which he suggests inclines Bodo-Eleazar to think that he can deceive him, drawing upon readings from diverse Hebrew editions: "Poteris, et tu, quia scis nos ignaros linguae Hebraeae, ex Hebraeorum codicum nos varietate inludere, ubi te victum praevideris esse." *Epist.* 16, PL 121: 487A.

<sup>82</sup> William Adler, "The Jews as Falsifiers: Charges of Tendentious Emendation in Anti-Jewish Christian Polemic," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, suppl. (1990): 1-27.

For some—e.g. Paul Alvarez and Amulo—Jews are guilty of deliberate corruptions in the biblical text (or its reading) out of some religious animus. Notably, these corruptions are now perceived to have entered the Hebrew text. Later, Bruno of Segni may provide yet another example. Commenting upon the reading of Isa. 7:14 in the LXX (“a virgin will conceive”), Bruno criticizes the reading based on the Hebrew that undermined the Christian doctrine of the Virgin Birth. This text was one of those at the very center of religious controversy, and Bruno thus exhorts the Jews, “Correct therefore your books, Jews, which we do not doubt you have falsified out of envy.”<sup>83</sup>

For others—e.g. Haimo of Auxerre (d. 855), Berno of Reichenau (d. 1048), and Peter Abelard (1079-1142)—although the Jewish translators of the LXX omitted certain verses from their work that tend to support Christian trinitarian dogma, they obviously had not done so in order to confound Christians who would only come later, but rather had edited their work in order not to offend their patron, Ptolemy, whom all describe as a Platonist and a monotheist.<sup>84</sup> Differences between the Hebrew text and the Septuagint, then, are here not attributed to Jewish malice but to Jewish sensitivity. Yet it is these changes, as Bede noted, that suggest that it is the Greek, and not the Hebrew, codices that require correction.

In fact, this more moderate attitude seems to dominate and, by the twelfth century, new interests appear that would seem to promote it further. Indeed, there are good reasons to expect the charge of tendentious emendation to disappear in the twelfth century. Let me suggest several of them. First, as Jews began to turn the charge of falsification of the text of the Old Testament against Christians, its polemical value when directed against Jews was diminished. Second, the Christian claim of an organized conspiracy to alter the sacred texts presupposed a kind of uniformity among copies of the Scriptures in Jewish communities that was felt wanting in Christian communities. Finally, as Christian polemical encounters turned to the East and to the threat of Islam, Christians increasingly found themselves called upon to *defend* the textual tradition of the Hebrew Bible before Muslim critics. As a result, the imputation of a charge of Jewish falsification of scripture becomes more costly by the twelfth century.

In part, this may have been due to a growing awareness of the number of discordant editions of the Latin Bible. As already noted, Jerome complained of the almost innumerable divergent Latin translations of the

<sup>83</sup> “Corrigite ergo libros vestros, Judaei, quos invidiose falsatos fuisse non dubitamus.” Bruno of Segni, *Commentaria in Matthaum*, 1, PL 165: 76C.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. Haymo of Auxerre, *Homiliae de tempore*, 12, PL 118: 77D [incorrectly attributed there to Haimo or Halberstadt]; Berno of Reichenau, *De varia psalmorum atque cantuum modulatione*, PL 142: 1132B; and Peter Abelard, *Introductio ad Theologiam*, 1.15, PL 178: 1008C; and 1.20, PL 178: 1029B; and *Theologia Christiana* 1.120, CC CM 12 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1969).

biblical text.<sup>85</sup> In the West after Jerome, despite the appearance of a so-called *vulgate* text, the proliferation of variant biblical texts seemed only to increase. Rabanus Maurus remarks that the number of Latin translations of Scripture rendered from Greek exemplars is, regrettably, "infinitus," for in the beginning anyone who had a little knowledge of Greek thought to translate into Latin.<sup>86</sup> The fact that Jerome's translation was (largely) based on Hebrew exemplars recommended it to Latin Christendom, without altogether dismissing the authority of the LXX or eliminating the appeal of other Latin translations based on a Greek exemplar. Yet as Jews entered the literary arena of religious polemic in the West in the second half of the twelfth century, it had become clear too that the Christian accusation of deliberate falsification could be turned against Christians themselves precisely because of the number of discordant translations of the text. This development is accompanied by growing doubts and insecurity among Christian polemicists regarding their Latin edition of the Old Testament. Ironically, Peter the Venerable's spirited defense of Jerome's translation may only reveal the extent of his doubts,<sup>87</sup> when he asserts, ingenuously, that while the Hebrew text and the Septuagint may disagree, the Hebrew and the Latin do not!<sup>88</sup> Indeed, Peter adds, it is the Christians who are the true and faithful guardians of the writings of Moses, having preserved them from corruption by translating them accurately from the Hebrew and carrying them to all the peoples of the earth, thereby usurping the role Augustine had reserved for the Jews.<sup>89</sup>

In fact, it may have been a more aggressive position among Jewish disputants that evinced this defensive posture from Christian polemicists with respect to the text of the Scriptures. This is evident already as early as the end of the eleventh century in Gilbert Crispin's *Disputation of a Jew and a Christian*, where the Jewish interlocutor attacks Christians for using a Latin translation of the Bible that departs from the Hebrew. Moreover, he tries to force his opponent to admit that the Jews have preserved the authentic text of Scripture in Hebrew unchanged; therefore, variant readings in Christian Bibles must necessarily be false. Gilbert defends the Latin translations and insists disingenuously that Christians have nothing in their Scriptures not found in Jewish models. Ignoring Jerome's version entirely, he claims that Latin Christians have taken their Old Testament from the Greek LXX, produced by learned Jews, and translated word for word—or sense for sense—into Latin.

<sup>85</sup> *Praefatio Hieronymi in Librum Josue ben Nun*, PL 28: 463A.

<sup>86</sup> Rabanus Maurus, *De clericorum institutione*, 2.44, PL 107: 366.

<sup>87</sup> On this point, see too Langmuir, *Toward a Definition of Anti-Semitism*, p. 205.

<sup>88</sup> Peter the Venerable, *Adversus Judeorum inveteratam duritiem*, 2.287.

<sup>89</sup> *Adversus Judeorum inveteratam duritiem*, 4.1090f.

Since this argument fails to persuade Gilbert's Jewish interlocutor, who claims quite incredibly to know nothing of the LXX, Gilbert adds that the charge that *Christians* had falsified the text of the Bible is unknown from the time of the conflict between the primitive church and the synagogue. Since at that time Jews sought every instrument they could with which to strike down the Christian faith, if there were anything at all in this charge surely it would have appeared then. The fact that it did not suggests that it is an unfounded novelty.<sup>90</sup> Where Jerome remarked that had Jews altered the Bible before the New Testament era Jesus or the apostles would certainly have said so, now Gilbert Crispin adds that had Christians in the primitive church done so certainly their enemies the Jews would have attacked them for so doing. For him this argument from silence is proof against tampering.

The argument from silence, however, is especially weak. So, in Joseph Kimhi's (ca. 1105-1170) *Sefer ha-Berit*, a discussion in dialogue form between a Jew and a heretic (i.e. a Christian), the Jew attacks the Christian community for "errors of translation and deliberate changes in the Christian Bible."<sup>91</sup> Similarly, in the thirteenth century, the anonymous author of the *Nizzahon Vetus* (*Old Book of Polemic*) notes that while Jerome made every effort to return to the Hebrew text for his translation, "yet those who came after him [Jerome] wrote their own [biblical] text and overturned everything."<sup>92</sup>

Such a reversal in the polemical literature did not entirely eliminate a Christian effort to find refuge in the claim that it was the *Jews* who had falsified the Bible. Peter of Blois, while agreeing that the Jewish translators of the Septuagint had only emended their text in order not to offend Ptolemy, nevertheless discouraged his readers from engaging in actual disputation with contemporary Jews. The effort to convert them will certainly fail, he concluded, for Jews will seize upon any subterfuge—even corrupting the Scriptures themselves—in order to avoid acknowledging Christian claims.<sup>93</sup>

Still, examples like this one seem relatively less frequent in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, perhaps because both Jewish and Christian sources indicate that by the twelfth century Jews *did* begin to redirect this charge of the falsification of biblical texts against Christian disputants. They evidently felt themselves in the stronger position, perhaps because of the disingenuous claim that the Hebrew codices of the Bible were uniform in all Jewish

<sup>90</sup> Gilbert Crispin, *Disputatio Iudei*, 128, 1-11, p. 43 (Sapir-Abulafia and Evans edition).

<sup>91</sup> Quoted in Hanne Trautner-Kromann, *Shield and Sword. Jewish Polemics Against Christianity and the Christians in France and Spain from 1100-1500* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1993), p. 63. This book provides a valuable survey of Jewish polemical literature in the Middle Ages and includes short texts and translation for all the works considered. Kimhi's work, the author suggests, was written ca. 1160.

<sup>92</sup> *The Jewish-Christian Debate in the High Middle Ages. A Critical Edition of the Nizzahon Vetus*, ed. David Berger (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1979), p. 148.

<sup>93</sup> Peter of Blois, *Contra perfidiam Judaeorum*, 1, PL 207: 828A.

communities.<sup>94</sup> Equally important, the Christian charge of a Jewish conspiracy to corrupt the Scriptures may have entailed an implicit acknowledgement of this putative uniformity. If, as Amulo had suggested, Jews had the capacity to suppress Christian truth, altering all their [liturgical] texts, then it was possible for them to establish a text that was uniformly corrupt. Ironically, then, a Jewish conspiracy may have assumed the sort of textual harmony Jewish disputants now claimed. In contrast, Christians found themselves increasingly stymied by a proliferation of variant biblical texts. At the end of the eleventh century, Ivo of Chartres (d. 1115) likely reflects a common concern when he exhorts the clergy to guard against reading falsified codices in the Church.<sup>95</sup> The sense that many Christian copies of the Scriptures were unreliable also promoted serious efforts to produce a corrected text in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Consequently, for a time Christian theologians do seem to retreat from the charge of Jewish false emendation, in part because as a polemical device it contained the seeds of its own destruction, for the assumption of a conspiracy of falsification presupposed a kind of agreement and textual harmony in Jewish communities which Christians felt was very much lacking in their own.

This lack was serious. Despite the efforts of Victorine theologians, of Stephen Harding of Cîteaux, and of the Cisterican Hebraist Nicholas Man-jacoria (d. ca. 1145) to produce a corrected text in the twelfth century, Denifle remarks that a survey of the manuscripts of "corrected" Bibles from this period reveals so many corruptions or deviations that hardly one text

---

<sup>94</sup> Although Christian ignorance of Hebrew texts might explain a willingness to believe that there was only *one* Hebrew edition of the Bible, one may also credit the authority of Josephus, who, in his *Contra Apionem* (1.38), insists that there are no discrepancies or inconsistencies in the [sacred] books of the Jews. Raymond Martini does just this (cf. *infra* n. 120). While Gilbert Crispin's text provides an example in which the Jewish interlocutor redirects a Christian polemical attack, later (Renaissance) Jewish texts seem to make this claim even more forcefully. So for example Issac ben Abraham Troki (d. ca. 1594) criticized Jerome for "accommodating Scripture to the notions of his own creed." The differences that appeared as a result in the textual traditions of the Scriptures in the two communities caused each side to accuse the other of falsification. See his *Hizzuk Emunah* 1.21, quoted in Daniel Lasker, *Jewish Philosophical Polemics Against Christianity in the Middle Ages* (New York: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1977), p. 4. R. Johanan Loria at the turn of the sixteenth century applied the axiom that the original text is always superior to and more reliable than the copy. Begging the question, he adds that Christians have only a copy of Torah, and therefore their text is suspect when compared to the original. See Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson, "Jewish-Christian Disputation in the Setting of Humanism and Reformation in the German Empire," *Harvard Theological Review* 59 (1966), p. 381.

<sup>95</sup> Ivo's concern is equally directed toward New Testament apocrypha: "Curandum est et sacerdotali diligentia providendum, ut falsatos codices, et a vera et sincera veritate discordes in nullo usu lectionis habeantur. Apocrypha autem Scripturac, quae sub nominibus apostolorum, multarum habent seminarium falsitatum, non solum interdicendae, sed etiam penitus auferendos, et ignibus concremandae." *Decreti*, 4.153, PL 161: 301C. Moreover, those who are guilty of falsifying the texts are anathematized (*Decreti*, 4.158).



agrees fully with any other, especially when looking at books of the Old Testament.<sup>96</sup> This situation was not improved by the production in the early thirteenth century of the so-called Parisian Bible, which introduced interpolations from Christian glosses and exegesis. Although intended to be a "corrected" text, in the 1260's Roger Bacon (ca. 1214-ca. 1292) made it plain that the corrected text multiplied the reader's difficulties. He criticized members of the new religious orders—Dominicans and Franciscans both—who, in their effort to produce a corrected Bible, only created more divergent texts, with more readings than one Bible can contain. Thus, Bacon composes a lengthy defense of the study of languages—Hebrew and Greek in particular—as absolutely necessary for a correct understanding of Scripture and tradition.<sup>97</sup> With such skills, he hoped, one could at least go back to the Hebrew or Greek sources and correct the errors of transmission. These errors were created at least in part by the new economics of a medieval university town, which saw the appearance of copyists for hire.<sup>98</sup> Such copyists were in fact largely responsible for the Parisian Bible, which Raphael Loewe once described as "the fruit of private enterprise on the part of the Paris stationers . . ."<sup>99</sup>

In such circumstances the charge of Jewish tampering becomes less secure. A retreat from the principle of Jewish conspiracy, however, would also have the positive outcome of eliminating the Christian assumption of uniformity in Jewish biblical texts. Only an awareness of later Jewish translations and also of various Hebrew and Aramaic versions could provide the comforting assurance that Jews were in a no more enviable position than Christian theologians with respect to the quality of their textual tradition.

Finally, an equally important reason to soften, if not abandon, this charge of false emendation can be traced to the growing number of literary encounters with Islam in the twelfth century and later.<sup>100</sup> From its very origin, an important part of the Muslim polemic against Christianity rested on the claim that the text of Scripture had been falsified in Jewish and Chris-

<sup>96</sup> Heinrich Denifle, "Die Handschriftlichen der Bibel-Correctorien des 13. Jahrhunderts," in *Archiv für Literatur- und Kirchen-Geschichte des Mittelalters*, ed. P. Heinrich Denifle and Franz Ehrle, vol. 4 (Freiburg im Breisgau: 1888), pp. 263-311; 471-601. Denifle remarks: "Das Verdeben wurde immer grösser, so dass kaum eine Handschrift des 12. Jahrhunderts der andern gleichsieht, und zwar vorzüglich hinsichtlich dess Alten Testaments." (p. 270) Perhaps the best discussion of efforts to correct the biblical text in this period will be found in Gilbert Dahan, *Les intellectuels Chrétiens et les Juifs au moyen âge* (Paris: Les éditions du cerf, 1990), pp. 272-285.

<sup>97</sup> The "Opus Maius" of Roger Bacon, ed. John Henry Bridges (London: 1900), vol. 3: *Opus Maius III: De utilitate grammaticae*, 4 (pp. 94-95).

<sup>98</sup> Denifle, "Die Handschriftlichen der Bibel-Correctorien des 13. Jahrhunderts," p. 278.

<sup>99</sup> Raphael Loewe, "The Medieval History of the Latin Vulgate" in *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 2: *The West from the Fathers to the Reformation*, ed. G.W.H. Lampe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 147.

<sup>100</sup> As Hava Lazarus-Yaffe notes, at this time "the greater bulk of interfaith polemical activity

tian communities.<sup>101</sup> From the first century of Abbasid rule (750-850), Christians writing in Syriac or Arabic were compelled to respond to Muslim charges that they and the Jews had altered or distorted the Scriptures—both Old and New Testaments—in order to obscure their references to the prophetic career of Mohammad.<sup>102</sup> On occasion, Christians responded to this charge by bringing in Jewish witnesses for the defense, as it were. In one account of an alleged disputation between a Christian monk and Muslim scholars in Jerusalem ca. 800, the Christian notes that Jewish scholars especially—because of their known antipathy toward Christians—will provide the most reliable witnesses that Christians have neither corrupted nor falsified the texts of the prophets. He concludes, “Since the original text is in the hands of the Jews, and they are tenacious about it, if the Christians insert anything, the Jews will give them the lie, because they are their opponents and enemies.”<sup>103</sup>

More evidence of this sort of exchange was uncovered half a century ago by Arthur Jeffery, who published a text of letters sent between the eighth century Byzantine emperor Leo III (ca. 675-741) and the Umayyad Caliph, ‘Umar II. These letters have been preserved in an Armenian version by the chronicler Ghevond (9th or 10th century?) but Jeffery proposes that it, and a Latin version of Leo’s letter wrongly attributed to Leo VI,<sup>104</sup> share a Greek source. From the first, ‘Umar attacks Scripture as the foundation of Christian faith. He complains to Leo III that the writings of the Old and New Testaments “have been falsified by people unknown to you . . .,” namely the Jews.<sup>105</sup>

---

took place between Islam and Christianity, and a vast polemical literature exists. . . . This literature reflects, of course, the political and military rivalry between medieval Christianity and Islam, but it deals specifically with their different concepts of monotheism, prophecy, and Scripture.” *Intertwined Worlds. Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 5.

<sup>101</sup> For a study of the various ways in which the falsification of Scripture has been understood by ancient, classical, and modern Muslim theologians or exegetes, see Jean-Marie Gandeul and Robert Caspar, “Textes de la tradition musulmane concernant le tahrif (falsification) des écritures,” *Islamochristiana* 6 (1980): 61-104. Cf. also W. Montgomery Watt, “The Early Development of the Muslim Attitude to the Bible,” *Glasgow University Oriental Society, Transactions* 16 (1955-56): 50-62.

<sup>102</sup> Sydney Griffith notes that some early Muslim polemicists had argued that God first delivered the revelation found in the Gospels to Jesus in Hebrew, the language of his community. The fact that they are preserved in Greek, in copies produced by his fractious followers, is additional evidence that they have been falsified. See his “The Gospel in Arabic: An Inquiry into its Appearance in the First Abbasid Century,” *Oriens Christianus* 69 (1985), p. 129.

<sup>103</sup> Quoted in Sydney Griffith, “Jews and Muslims in Christian Syriac and Arabic Texts of the Ninth Century,” *Jewish History* 3/1 (1988), p. 68.

<sup>104</sup> The *Epistola Leonis Imperatoris Augusti cognomento Philosophi ad Omarum Saracenorum regem de fidei christianae veritate* . . . in PG 107: 315-324.

<sup>105</sup> Arthur Jeffery, “Ghevond’s Text of the Correspondence between ‘Umar II and Leo III,” *Harvard Theological Review* 37 (1944), p. 277.

This charge became fully entrenched by the eleventh century in the writings of Ibn Hazm of Cordova (d. 1064)—and later Muslim polemicists—who attempted a systematic proof to show that Jews and Christians had falsified their Scriptures, suppressing important verses that properly belong therein, which attest to the prophetic mission of Mohammad.<sup>106</sup> Again, this reflects frequent Muslim attacks to show that the text of the Scriptures had been deliberately altered throughout the ages by both Jews and Christians. In contrast, Islam was presumed to have a secure chain of transmission for the Qur'an.

In order to counter this charge in Christian-Muslim polemics, Christian authors—whether writing in Syriac, Arabic, Greek, or Latin—will be compelled to defend the authenticity of the Old Testament text against Muslim arguments. In response, Leo III argues that had the Jews falsified their Scriptures they would certainly have removed all those passages which can be understood to point to Jesus as messiah, on account of the enmity they bear toward Christians. The fact that ample support remains in the Old Testament for Christian claims is one proof, he insists, that they did not change these texts. A second argument is put forward on the basis of the impossibility of organizing such a vast conspiracy. With regard to the New Testament, a work translated into numerous languages for widely dispersed Christian communities, had one community introduced some change into the text it would be difficult to explain the universal accord of all of these copies of Scripture. Avoiding a conclusion later articulated by Amulo, Leo adds that if someone had attempted to alter all the sacred writings of Jews and Christians, "it would have been impossible for him to have gathered up all the books spread abroad in so many different languages . . . so as to add and subtract [from them] according to his idea."<sup>107</sup> Within the framework of Christian-Muslim polemics, then, Leo III becomes a defender not only of the authenticity of Christian Scriptures but of those of Jews as well.

The same may be said of the Cluniac abbot, Peter the Venerable, as evidenced by his *Liber contra sectam sive haeresim Saracenorum*. There he attempts to respond to Moslem objections that the Old and New Testaments had been corrupted or falsified. The Moslem agrees that some parts of these books are divine revelation and true (viz. the parts preserved or quoted in the Qur'an) but the rest is false and pernicious. The original texts of Scripture, he insists, had been lost and were restored by Jews and early Chris-

<sup>106</sup> For a discussion of these allegedly suppressed passages treating Mohammad, see Lazarus-Yaffe, *Intertwined Worlds. Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism*, ch. 4. For his attack on the gospels, in particular, cf. Gandeul and Caspar, "Textes de la tradition musulmane concernant le tahrif (falsification) des écritures," pp. 78ff.

<sup>107</sup> Jeffery, "Ghevond's text," p. 299.

tians ignorant of the original truth, based on hearsay and conjecture, mixing true and false. To this Peter inquires after any shred of proof and adds "But as for showing that they [the books of the Bible] were falsified . . . what authority, what reason do you offer by which we are compelled to agree?"<sup>108</sup> He demands evidence of tampering in any of the books of the Bible and, at the same time, dismisses a number of historical fallacies or "rumors" his Muslim opponent had suggested to undermine the authority of the textual tradition of the Hebrew Bible. Finally, he notes "I conclude, by necessary or [at least] probable argument, from all the things I have written already, that the Hebrew books were neither lost nor falsified."<sup>109</sup> Indeed, as already indicated, although Peter acknowledges that the translators of the Septuagint had emended the text so as not to offend their patron, he also insists most strongly that the Hebrew and Latin texts of the Bible are in full accord and that the integrity of the text has been safeguarded and preserved by Christians.

A conclusion such as this from one who was, in other respects, hardly sympathetic to the Jewish community, might be expected to lay to rest the charge of malicious Jewish corruption of the biblical text. Instead, surprisingly, something quite different occurs: it takes on new life in the thirteenth century. In this last section I would like to address, briefly, the reasons for its revitalization.

#### IV. *The Thirteenth Century*

The history of the charge of deliberate Jewish falsification of the Scriptures does not come to a close in the twelfth century. Nevertheless, I have suggested several reasons why it might appear to be less useful as a polemical instrument: 1. As a polemical device its currency was devalued once Jews had begun to turn it against Christians themselves; 2. The charge assumes a certain uniformity in Jewish biblical codices that was felt to be absent in Christian texts; and, 3. In the confrontation with Islam, Christian theologians found themselves compelled to *defend* the authenticity and the transmission of both Old and New Testaments. Collectively, these factors should

<sup>108</sup> "Unde probatis inquam quod proponitis? Unde ostenditis libros prius veraces, a sequentibus vel Judeis vel Christianis corruptos? . . . Sed ad probandum ut dictum est quod falsati fuerint, quam auctoritatem, quam rationem, quibus cedere compellamur affertis?" Peter's Latin text is found in James Kritzeck, *Peter the Venerable and Islam* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1964), pp. 220-291. The passage quoted is found on p. 249. Leo III had made a similar demand. If Muslims insist that the Hebrew Bible and the Gospel texts have been corrupted and falsified, then let them produce the authentic "originals" in order to demonstrate their claim. See Jeffery, "Ghevond's Text," p. 309.

<sup>109</sup> "Ex hiis omnibus quae supra scripsi nec perditos nec falsatos Hebraicos libros fuisse, aut necessario aut probabili argumento concludo." *Peter the Venerable and Islam*, p. 256.

have so fully undermined the value of the charge that the Jews had falsified the Scriptures as to eliminate it entirely, or very nearly so. Instead, it takes on new life in the thirteenth century. In this section of the paper I would like to address, briefly, the reasons for its revitalization.

As already noted, an important development in Christian polemical literature from the late twelfth century is to be found in its references to the Talmud and Jewish extra-biblical traditions. The positive encounters between Jewish and Christian exegetes of the twelfth century, which at least in part were generated by a Christian desire to correct the Bible, also had made Christians more aware of the existence of these materials. Similarly, contacts with Jewish converts to Christianity, such as Peter Alphonsi (d. ca. 1140) in the twelfth century and Nicholas Donin or Pablo Christiani (d. 1274) in the thirteenth, certainly made Christians better acquainted with the Talmud.<sup>110</sup> Such acquaintance, however, resulting in a better understanding of Judaism as a living religion, did not produce greater toleration, but rather greater tension and greater religious hatred for this minority community.<sup>111</sup>

Initial Christian responses to the Talmud and talmudic Judaism resulted in a broadly based attack on rabbinic Judaism and its practices and Jeremy Cohen argues, also characterized rabbinic Judaism as a rejection of the Judaism of the Bible and therefore a repudiation of what Augustine had perceived to be one of the positive values of Jews, namely their faithful (if misguided) adherence to the Mosaic Law. This view was promoted by Nicholas Donin in the first half of the thirteenth century, which resulted in the burning of the Talmud in Paris in 1242.<sup>112</sup> Now that Jews were perceived to have abandoned the teachings of the Mosaic torah for innovations grounded

<sup>110</sup> As already noted, Peter the Venerable was likely the first Christian polemicist to refer explicitly to the Talmud, although his actual knowledge of it was quite scanty. As the editor of his *Adversus Judeorum inveteratam duritiem* notes, Peter may have learned of the Talmud either from Jews or from recent Jewish converts to Christianity. Although she finds some parallels between the material Peter cites and that found in the Jewish convert Peter Alphonsi's *Dialogi ex Judeo Christiani* (PL 157, 535-672), she remarks that Alphonsi does not use the term Talmud, but only teaching, *doctrina*. See the *Adversus Judeorum inveteratam duritiem*, p. xv. Nicholas Donin had, by the middle of the thirteenth century, compiled his *Extractationes de Talmut*, which was intended to reveal the blasphemous contents of the work.

<sup>111</sup> In a discussion whose thesis is as elegant as it is well argued, Jeremy Cohen remarks that "In the high medieval academy, increased study of a minority [i.e. Jewish] viewpoint led not to greater toleration but to greater bifurcation between the circumscribed value of such an outlook and its despised protagonists. . . . For the medieval Jew, the results were dire." See his "Scholarship and Intolerance in the Medieval Academy: The Study and Evaluation of Judaism in European Christendom," in *Essential Papers on Judaism and Christianity in Conflict from Late Antiquity to the Reformation* (New York: New York University Press, 1990), p. 331.

<sup>112</sup> Although Robert Chazan's interpretation of these events does not support Cohen's thesis. See his "The Condemnation of the Talmud Reconsidered (1239-1248)," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 45 (1988): 11-30.

in the Talmud, there was no longer a compelling reason to tolerate them in Christian society as guardians of either the Law or texts of the Hebrew Bible. Instead, "The Church now depicted the 'living' Judaism of its own day as a heresy and a perversion . . . a gross deviation from the religion of the Old Testament."<sup>113</sup> While it is true that the early condemnation of the Talmud as a source of blasphemous and insulting materials against Christianity was, paradoxically, transformed by the effort of Christian polemicists of the second half of the thirteenth century to find in it concealed support for Christian doctrines, this effort only exaggerated a perception of Jewish mendacity.<sup>114</sup> Not only were they blind to the correct understanding of the Bible, but also to the Christian truths hidden in the Talmud—truths hidden there by Jewish leaders or rabbis of the post-biblical period who were portrayed not only as having known that Jesus was the Christ, but also as having attempted to conceal this knowledge from other Jews by deception, forgery, and falsification of the biblical text.<sup>115</sup>

While the canard that Jews had falsified the biblical text was in no way new, in the thirteenth century, as a result of growing Christian familiarity with talmudic sources, it will become far more sophisticated, and will appeal to Jewish authorities who seem to confirm suspicions of Jewish textual emendations. Such emendations, already acknowledged by both Jewish and Christian tradition with respect to the Septuagint, were now also understood to be present in the Hebrew text, based on allusions in early midrashic materials to scribal corrections or *tikkune soferim*.

The number of such scribal corrections in the Hebrew text is unclear, but

<sup>113</sup> Jeremy Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews*, p. 76.

<sup>114</sup> For the impact of the "discovery" of the Talmud on Jewish-Christian relations in Spain, see Daniel Lasker, "Jewish-Christian Polemics in Light of the Expulsion from Spain," *Judaism* 41/2 (1992): 148-155. See also Trautner-Kromann's *Shield and Sword. Jewish Polemics Against Christianity and the Christians in France and Spain from 1100-1500*, ch. 4 and following.

<sup>115</sup> The difficulties inherent in such a view are highlighted by Nachmanides in the disputation in Barcelona. He contradicts Raymond Peñafort on this point and remarks that it is ridiculous to suggest that the sages of the Talmud *knew* the truth of Christianity but remained, as they did, Jews. See his *Disputation*, in *Judaism on Trial: Jewish-Christian Disputations in the Middle Ages*, pp. 103-104. Nevertheless, this accusation seems to reflect a change in the perception of what Jews knew about Jesus during his lifetime. While Augustine and early medieval tradition generally affirmed that the Jews had been ignorant of both Jesus's messianic and divine status, by the thirteenth century mendicant theologians argued that the Jews who were involved in his crucifixion *knew* both that he was messiah and Son of God. Thus, his killers acted not from ignorance but from willful malice. According to Jeremy Cohen, this shift helped mendicant theologians not only to justify the Church's increasingly violent attitude toward the Jews, but also explained why they had abandoned their biblical religion: because, knowing that the messiah had come, they could no longer observe its rituals honestly. As a consequence, they had to "fashion" a new religion, based on the Talmud, that was far removed from the biblical covenant. See Jeremy Cohen, "The Jews as Killers of Christ from Augustine to the Friars," *Traditio* 39 (1983): 1-27.

the number eighteen seems to have had at least symbolic value.<sup>116</sup> Equally unclear is the identity of these scribes and the source of the emendations.<sup>117</sup> While such corrections may simply reflect glosses on passages of the Hebrew Bible, in Christian hands references to these *tikkunim* suggested a deliberate program of falsification. Similarly, the numerous instances of *kethib-qerei* in the Bible, i.e. the vocalization of consonants found in the text with vowels from another word not written there, suggested again to Christian polemicists a program of conscious falsification.<sup>118</sup>

As Jeremy Cohen has pointed out, the first Christian writer to connect the charge of Jewish falsification of Scripture to the Jewish tradition of scribal emendation is the Dominican, Raymond Martini (d. 1284), the author of the monumental *Pugio Fidei* (*Dagger of Faith*).<sup>119</sup> Martini, then, goes well beyond earlier assertions of Jewish falsification by adducing evidence drawn from the Jews themselves. This approach for the first time seemed to confirm the charge of tendentious emendations, convicting the Jews from their own mouths, as it were.

<sup>116</sup> For a list of passages involved, and a discussion of the number of such passages, see W. Emery Barnes, "Ancient Corrections in the Text of the Old Testament (*Tikkun Sopherim*)," *Journal of Theological Studies* 1 (1900): 387-414. Barnes, however, views the notion of actual emendations to the text of the Bible as a popular misconception. Rather, he insists, the scribes were merely "correcting" our understanding of the text by pointing out when the text spoke euphemistically. William McKane has more recently examined the various rabbinic sources for this tradition and attempts to identify all the allegedly emended texts. See his "Observations on the Tikkunê Sôpherim," in *On Language, Culture, and Religion: In Honor of Eugene A. Nida*, eds. Matthew Black and William Smalley (The Hague; Paris: Mouton: 1974): 53-77.

<sup>117</sup> Dominique Barthélemy argues that the scribes were Sadduceans active during the second century B.C.E.; that their corrections were inherited by the Pharisees; and that their corrections are often directed against readings found in biblical texts from Qumran. See his "Les Tikkunê Sopherim et la critique textuelle de l'Ancien Testament," in *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum* 9 (1963): 285-304. Saul Lieberman suggests that these "corrections" represent an effort to impose some conformity upon *vulgata* or biblical texts found in common use. See his *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1962), pp. 25ff.

<sup>118</sup> There are likely between 1000-1500 such instances in the Hebrew Bible, the best known perhaps involving the vocalization of the tetragrammaton for public reading. Whether this should be viewed as a program of conscious emendation, however, or again a reflection of the editorial process of redaction, is the subject of Harry M. Orlinsky's "The Origin of the Kethib-Qere System: A New Approach," *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum* 7 (1959): 184-192.

<sup>119</sup> Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews*, p. 148. Raymond Martini's text was probably written in 1280 as a response to Nachmanides' performance in the Barcelona disputation of 1263. Although likely the work of several researchers or compilers, it reflects a prodigious effort. Robert Chazan remarks that "No other work can match the *Pugio Fidei* for its dedicated effort to probe the Jewish psyche, for its massive collection of Jewish sources, for its careful and sophisticated argumentation on the broadest possible range of theological issues." *Daggers of Faith. Thirteenth-Century Missionizing and Jewish Response*, p. 115. Chazan devotes his entire chapter to this work and, indeed, draws the title for his own study of missionizing efforts in the thirteenth century from Martini's text. For the significance of the Barcelona disputation itself, see also Chazan's *Barcelona and Beyond: The Disputation of 1263 and its Aftermath* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Oxford: University of California Press, 1992).

This new twist to an old polemical instrument evidently concerned Jewish polemicists. R. Solomon ben Abraham ibn Adret (ca. 1235-1310) responds directly to Martini's argument in his *Perushei Aggadot*. Employing arguments not unlike those found earlier in Augustine, he insists that if the Jews had changed the text of the Bible during Moses's lifetime, he would have certainly corrected them. More, they could not have done so later, when they were dispersed across the world, since this would have required some worldwide gathering for this purpose, which could not have gone unnoticed. Nor could some have introduced a change and others not, for the Jews all over the world have the same practices. Christians, he acknowledged, have hunted high and low for evidence of Jewish forgeries, but all they have come up with is a few words which Jews call *tikkune sopherim*.<sup>120</sup>

Despite an effort to dismiss this renewed attack, it clearly represented a serious danger. Martini, who held a chair in Hebrew in Barcelona, included innumerable passages in Hebrew and Latin in his *Pugio Fidei* in order to demonstrate the truth of his claim. More, he attempted to give some precision to the charge of Jewish falsification by locating it chronologically. It could not have occurred after the time of St. Jerome, he claims, because Jerome would certainly have translated the authentic text of the Scriptures, had it been available to him. Nor could it have taken place before the time of Josephus, whose remark that the Jews have preserved their texts inviolate Martini finds credible.<sup>121</sup> Nevertheless, based on his Latin reading of Jer. 8:8, Martini insists that this Jewish crime had already been foreseen by the prophet.<sup>122</sup> Therefore, this program of conscious falsification of the text must have occurred between the time of the Josephus, at the end of the first century C.E., and Jerome, in the fourth century C.E.

Moreover, Martini reads the legend of the translation of the Septuagint quite differently than had earlier Christian writers. Eusebius and Jerome accepted that the translators may have consciously altered certain passages in the text in order not to offend their patron, Ptolemy. But this claim was employed as a means of explaining why either the Hebrew or later Greek translations contained readings that better supported Christian doctrines. In addition, patristic writers did not attribute such "emendations" to malice on the part of the translators. Martini, by contrast, seems to view the emendations introduced to the Septuagint and those that have been entered into

<sup>120</sup> For the Hebrew text and English translation, see Trautner-Kromann's *Shield and Sword. Jewish Polemics Against Christianity and the Christians in France and Spain from 1100-1500*, pp. 136-137.

<sup>121</sup> Cf. Josephus, *Contra Apionem*, 1.38 and 1.42.

<sup>122</sup> Martini's translation refers to the "pen of the scribes [that] has wrought deceit or falsehood." The Hebrew text, by contrast, remarks only that the "pen of the scribes is in vain." See Raymond Martini, *Pugio Fidei*, 2.3.9 (Leipzig, 1687; reprint Farnborough, Eng.: 1967), p. 278, fol. 223.



the Hebrew text as part of a continuing pattern. While he does not go so far as to suggest that the translators of the Septuagint acted out of malice, he is quite certain that later Jewish scribes, acting on the precedent established for the Septuagint, did so.<sup>123</sup>

The premise of the Jewish falsification of Scripture is not only established on the basis of perceived discrepancies between the Septuagint, the Vulgate, and the Hebrew text. Martini also condemns the Jewish scribes for having abandoned the Targum, or Aramaic translations of Scripture, which he views as offering better support than the Hebrew, in many instances, for Christian readings.<sup>124</sup> Finally, Jewish corrections to the text of Scripture clearly demonstrates for him that Jews—again, sometime between Josephus and Jerome—had repudiated the Law of Moses, for Moses had instructed them to “add nothing and delete nothing (cf. Deut. 4:2; 12:32)” from the words he had given them.

While Martini may have been the first Christian polemicist to appeal to the Jewish tradition of scribal corrections in order to defend the thesis of tendentious emendation, he was not the last. Slightly later, in the early fourteenth century, the Christian Hebraist Nicholas of Lyra (d. 1340) again defends the effort to return to the *Hebraica veritas* in order to correct copies of the Vulgate. Nevertheless, he counsels that “great caution must be taken with regard to the places in the text of the Old Testament that speak of the divine nature of Christ and its ramifications, several of which [texts] the Jews have falsified in defense of their error . . .”<sup>125</sup> Such corruptions introduced to the text might discourage the textual critic from exploring the Hebrew Bible, but Nicholas proposes further that the error and mendacity of the Jews can be demonstrated from more ancient copies of the Hebrew text of which he has heard, but which he has not seen.<sup>126</sup> Nicholas postulates the existence of an authentic and authoritative Hebrew Ur-text which

<sup>123</sup> Martini remarks that “in Messia solummodo, et per ipsum perfici (poterant) multa stupenda, et miranda Fidei Christianae mysteria, quae olim in libris sacris sancti Patres, et Prophetæ scripserunt, quae tam LXX interpretes, quam alii gentibus occultaverunt, and postea *Sopherim*, id est Scribae Judaici, habentes quidem zelum Dei non secundum scientiam, mysteria, et secreta de libris abraserunt.” *Pugio Fidei* 3.3.4.11 (p. 695, fol. 547). Later in the text, although acknowledging that the translators of the Septuagint omitted certain passages from the copy made for Ptolemy because they were reluctant to subject the teachings of the Scriptures to ridicule, Raymond suggests that the scribes erased passages from the scriptures later either because they were reluctant to hand these passages down to the gentiles, or because they feared they would create scandal among the more simple Jews, “or perhaps because they hardly considered at all the dignity of the divine counsel for the salvation of the human race.” [“vel forte quia celsitudinem divini consilii super salute generis humani minime perpendebant.”] This last remark is reminiscent of the imputation of misanthropy to the Jews in antiquity. *Pugio Fidei*, p. 698, fol. 549.

<sup>124</sup> Cf. *Pugio Fidei*, 3.1.10.15 (p. 539, fol. 432) and 3.3.4.14-15 (p. 705, fol. 555).

<sup>125</sup> *Postilla literalis super Biblia* 1:3G, quoted by Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews*, p. 177.

<sup>126</sup> Thus, Christians have been unable to overcome the Jews because “[Jews] pervert the

would reveal, if one could only locate it, the truth of Christian claims. In doing so, he proposes a curious new defense of the Hebrew Bible: the Hebrew text is the true one, but not *this* Hebrew text, that is the Masoretic text he had before him. The existence of such a text seems also to have been suggested to him by the Targum, which must reflect, in his mind, an older Hebrew version.

Moreover, this notion also makes its appearance in the anonymous biography of the master general of the Dominican order, Raymond de Peñaforde (d. 1275), composed in the fourteenth century. The biographer reports that Raymond had his friars instructed in Hebrew so that "they could overcome the malice and errors of the Jews, who might no longer, as they had been accustomed to do in the past, audaciously deny the true text and that the glosses of their own sages agree with our own saints in those things which pertain to the Catholic faith. Moreover, the falsehoods and corruptions which they [the Jews] have inserted in many places in the Bible to hide the mysteries of the Passion and other sacraments of the faith, might be revealed through the authentic Scriptures of those who are falsifiers of truth."<sup>127</sup>

Again, as one would expect, Jewish polemicists responded to these charges, even taking the offense to insist that it is the Vulgate that has been corrupted and falsified by Christians.<sup>128</sup> But perhaps equally dangerous as this development in Christian polemics was the migration of the charge of Jewish falsification of Scripture from religious polemics to other types of literature. For example, by the late twelfth century this charge had already made its appearance in texts of canon law. Rufinus, Bishop of Assisi (fl. 1157-1179), reflects this shift in his *Summa decretorum*. There Rufinus remarks that "In the earliest time, before the Church spread through all parts of the world, there were perfect and uncorrupted volumes of the Hebrews and Greeks, but as

---

true text and deny the truth just as they deny the divinity of Christ. This might be done from ancient Bibles, which were not corrupted in this and other passages in which there is mention of the divinity of Christ, if they [these Bibles] can be had. In this way our predecessors used to argue against them [the Jews] over this and similar passages. Yet although I myself have not seen any Bible of the Jews which has not been corrupted, I have faithfully heard from those worthy by reason of their lives, consciences, and knowledge, who swear on oath that they have seen it thus in ancient Bibles." *Postilla literalis super Biblia* 6:277BC, quoted by Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews*, p. 184.

<sup>127</sup> "quod possunt Judeorum convincere malitias et errores, qui jam non possunt, sicut actenus consueverant, audacter negare textum verum et glossas suorum sapientium antiquiorum cum sanctis nostris in hiis que ad fidem catholicam pertinent concordantes. Falsitates insuper et corruptiones quas in Biblia in locis pluribus inserverant ad occultanda mysteria Passionis et cetera sacramenta fidei, falsarii veritatis per Scripturas eorum authenticas revelantur." *Raymundiana* 1:32, Balme, Franciscus and Celsus Paben, eds., *Monumenta Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum historica* 6., fasc. 1 (Rome: and Stuttgart: 1898).

<sup>128</sup> Cohen turns to Hayyim ibn Musa's *Magen wa-Romah* as a good example. See *The Friars and the Jews*, p. 194.

time passed, when at length the Christian population grew and a large number of heresies were begotten in the Church, then the Hebrew and Greek exemplars were corrupted by the Jews themselves who were envious of the Church, as much as by the heretics, although the Hebrew were corrupted more than the Greek and the Greek more than the Latin."<sup>129</sup>

Gilbert Dahan suggests that most of the canonists incorporated into their work this notion that the Jews, out of jealousy, had mutilated the Hebrew text.<sup>130</sup> Grabois proposes that the appearance of this tradition in texts of canon law, and the strong defense of the Latin edition, may simply reflect the conservative interest of canonists in a fixed text, not subject to revision, in order to protect the ordinances of the Church that might depend on it.<sup>131</sup> In my view, it is also an indicator of the insecurity, tension, and criticism that arose in some circles as Christian exegetes turned to Jewish scholars to learn Hebrew in order to correct Christian copies of Scripture.<sup>132</sup> Hugh and Andrew of St. Victor provide two good examples from the twelfth century who relied on Jewish teachers.<sup>133</sup> It is not altogether surprising, then, that Hugh should have strongly condemned the opinion Rufinus later articulates. For Hugh, those who argue that the Latin codices are truer than the Greek, and the Greek more reliable than the Hebrew, are simply wrong.<sup>134</sup>

While the charge of Jewish falsification of Scripture had migrated into canon law before the end of the twelfth century, by the thirteenth century it would make its appearance in vernacular literature. One example is Matfre Ermengaud's *Breviari d'amor*, written in 1288.<sup>135</sup> Written in verse in the *langue d'oc* (occitan), it contains a lengthy anti-Jewish section illustrated with several miniatures depicting Jews blindfolded by the devil, suggesting both their relationship to the devil and their inability to perceive the Christian truths contained in their own writings. To this charge he adds a condemnation of the

<sup>129</sup> "In tempore primitivo, antequam ecclesia per omnes partes orbis proparegetur, incorrupta erant et integra volumina Hebreorum atque Graccorum, procedente vero tempore, cum admodum christianus populus cresceret et multorum hereses in ecclesia germinarent, tam ab ipsis Iudeis ecclesie invidentibus quam ab hereticis hebraica et greca exemplaria corrupta sunt, sed magis hebraica quam greca, magis greca quam latina" in *Summa decretorum*, ed. Heinrich Singer (Paderborn, 1902), p. 23.

<sup>130</sup> *Les intellectuels Chrétiens et les Juifs au moyen age*, p. 273f.

<sup>131</sup> Cf. Grabois's "The Hebraica Veritas and Jewish-Christian Intellectual Relations in the Twelfth Century," p. 626.

<sup>132</sup> For criticism of those Cistercians who sought Hebrew teachers among the Jews, cf. *supra*, n. 19.

<sup>133</sup> For a good discussion, see Michael Signer's introduction to *Andreae de Sancto Victore Opera VI: Expositionem in Ezechielem*, CCCM 53 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1991).

<sup>134</sup> See his *Adnotationes Elucidatoriae in Pentateuchon*, PL 175: 32B.

<sup>135</sup> For a discussion of the author and the significance of the work, see Bernhard Blumenkranz, "Écriture et image dans la polémique antijuive de Matfre Ermengaud," in *In Cahiers de Fanjeaux*, vol. 12: *Juifs et judaïsme de Languedoc* (Toulouse: Édouard Privat) pp. 295-317.

Talmud, the source of Jewish blasphemies. Not only are they blind to divine truth, but they are moreover "so stubborn and so crafty that every day they seek a pretext for making their error appear trivial, as they forge and falsify the text of the Old Testament."<sup>136</sup> Once again, then, there appears the accusation that the Jews cannot be trusted to preserve the text of the Old Testament.

## V. Conclusion

Throughout this paper I have attempted to show that, as Augustine averred, one element of the Jews' new mission in the divine economy was to preserve the text of the Scriptures inviolate, bearing both the Scriptures and the observance of Mosaic rituals everywhere with them throughout the diaspora. For so doing, they were to be tolerated in Christian society, for which they provided a valuable function. But I have also argued that this notion that the Jews serve to safeguard the text of the Scriptures represents only one aspect of a more complicated perception of their relationship with the Bible. Alongside this view there had always existed another, namely that the Jews were responsible for *corrupting* or *falsifying* the biblical text in order to conceal Christian truths, particularly those that would demonstrate Christian messianic claims.

Moreover, I have attempted to show that there are good reasons to suppose that the premise of Jewish falsification of the Bible would disappear—either entirely or nearly so—in the twelfth century when its usefulness as an instrument in religious polemics diminished. Its utility diminished, I believe, because Jews turned the charge of falsification against Christians themselves; because the Christian claim of an organized conspiracy to alter the sacred texts presupposed a kind of uniformity among Jewish copies of the Scriptures that was felt wanting in Christian communities; and because as Christian polemical encounters turned to the East and to the threat of Islam, Christians increasingly found themselves called upon to *defend* the textual tradition of the Hebrew Bible before Muslim critics.

The fact that this polemical accusation of conscious malicious falsification of the Scriptures does *not* disappear—in fact, that it gains proponents in the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries—is something of a surprise that can only be explained by a sudden new sophistication which characterizes this attack. It became more sophisticated when Christian polemicists could turn to the extra-biblical writings of Jews themselves in order to support this contention,

<sup>136</sup> "Quar tan son dur et maligne/Que tot jorn van queren color/Ab que pallio lur error,/Mal enten den e corrompen/La letra del Viehl Testamen;" *Breviari d'amor* 11.946-50, ed. Gabriel Azais (2 vols.; Béziers, 1862; Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1977), 2: 412.

drawing on the Jewish tradition of scribal correction or *tikkune sopherim*. In the process, the role that Jews had in the divine economy, according to Augustine, had become more and more problematic. It could not be expected that the Jews, as guardians of the Scriptures, would testify—willy nilly—to the truth of Christian claims. Nor did they continue to observe the Mosaic Law, safeguarding their biblical religion. Having abandoned the Bible for the Talmud, they were guilty of forgetting the Law and the Lord. Deprived of this positive role in Christian society, all that remained of the Augustinian model of toleration was that the Jews should suffer every degradation in order to reveal more fully that God had rejected them in order to pour out fully his divine love and compassion upon the Church, the New Israel. As guardians of Scripture, they could, increasingly, be dismissed as malicious and unreliable.